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New Main Building

LUTHER COLLEGE

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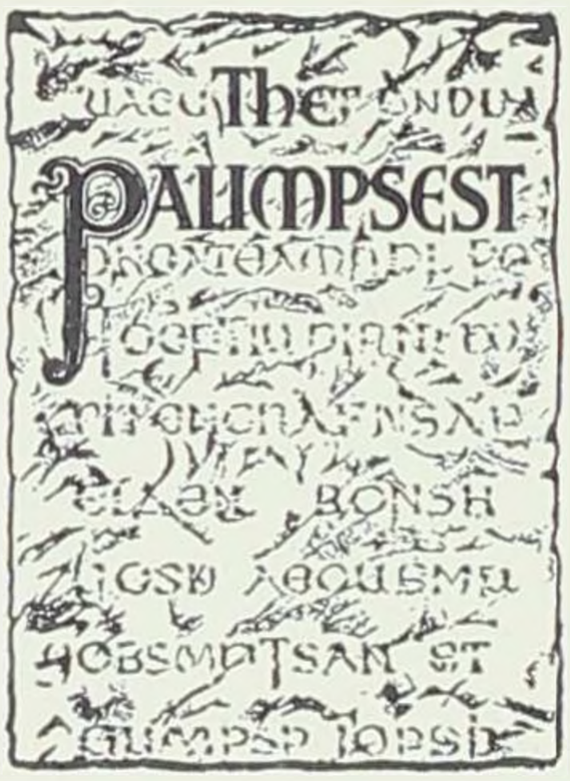

The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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Illustrations

All illustrations are courtesy of Luther College.

Author

David T. Nelson is professor of English at Luther College and author of *Luther College — 1861-1961.*

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THE PALIMPSEST

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Norwegians Found the College

Luther College is the oldest college in this country founded by people of Norwegian descent. It began with a total enrollment of sixteen. Today, in its centennial year, it has an enrollment almost one hundred times greater. Its first building was a parsonage that had stood vacant for two years in Halfway Creek, thirteen miles north of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Today, in Decorah it has ten major buildings, all but two of fireproof construction and all but four built in the last thirteen years; it also has a dozen residences and minor structures, besides the usual World War II war surplus buildings, some of which will be torn down this year. Its campus, one of the most beautiful in the state, is a park-like area on a bluff in northwest Decorah. Expanses of lawn dotted with native oaks and elms overlook the valley of the Upper Iowa (Oneota) River to the west and slope gently toward the town to the east. In this lovely natural setting of woodland, meadow, bluffs, and river, the college owns almost 600 acres of land.

How did it happen that the early Norwegian settlers insisted on having a college of their own? And how did they come to locate it in northeastern Iowa?

The Norwegian immigrant brought with him the background of the Lutheran faith in which he had been reared. Despite many kindnesses shown him by honest friends and neighbors in his newly-adopted land, he knew that he was not yet quite one of them. He found himself more at home among his own, where there was a language familiar from childhood and where he was sure to be understood.

Although there were kindly efforts to interest him in churches already existing in his new country, he longed for the rites of the faith with which he was familiar. He longed to hear the old truths in the language which was nearest his heart — truths he had learned at his mother's knee, and golden Bible passages he had memorized as he prepared for confirmation. So when the first pastors of Norwegian extraction appeared on the scene, they were welcomed with open arms. People flocked from far and near to attend services in rude cabins, or sometimes in barns, or during summer months under great oak trees in the open air. Here the assemblage heard the old gospel proclaimed in the language they loved and understood.

There was another aspect of this loyalty to the

Lutheran faith of the fathers which must not be overlooked. The early Norwegian immigrants, like all other non-English-speaking newcomers, met with many difficulties because of their ignorance of the English language and because they were unacquainted with the customs and usages of the land to which they had come. They were met on the pier in the port of entry by agents seeking to sell them transportation to their destination. Often they fell into unscrupulous hands. Later they were besieged by promoters eager to sell them land.

Again they often were the victims of sharp practices. Here in the Middle West they encountered a climate with extremes of heat and cold far different from what they had known in the mother country. Failing to make the adjustments needed in their living habits, or being unable to do so, they fell victims in great numbers to malaria and ague; even cholera for a time found its way among them.

For example, Ole Rynning, son of a well-known pastor in Norway, in 1837 led a party of fifty emigrants to Beaver Creek, seventy miles south of Chicago. In midsummer the ground was dry; the newcomers were persuaded by land agents that here was a good place to settle. They built their rude cabins and spent the winter. In the spring most of the land proved to be marshy and was under water. Malarial fever broke out. Some few, abandoning their cabins and losing al-

most all their possessions, fled the settlement and moved elsewhere. Most of the remainder died, including the beloved Ole Rynning. In a rude coffin hollowed from an oak tree by the one well man in the settlement, he was buried on the prairie. His grave is unmarked and unknown.

Another example may be found in the fate of the *Atlantic,* a passenger boat carrying immigrants, which was rammed and sunk on Lake Erie in 1852. The official reports criticized those in charge. Of the more than 300 drowned, almost a fourth were Norwegians. News of such disasters traveled far and wide among Norwegian immigrants.

Moreover, in all the new settlements ague, malaria, and dysentery were found. In 1849, 1850, and 1852 cholera raged in many Mississippi Valley settlements. Whole families died. One prominent historian sums it up by saying: "The immigrants had sickness, fraud, and poverty as traveling companions."

Beset by these unforeseen problems, the immigrants were perplexed. Whom were they to trust? To whom were they to turn in their difficulties? They knew they could rely on each other, for most of them were neighbors or old and tried acquaintances from the homeland. They also had some strong lay spiritual leaders who served them well. Later, when a few clergymen, mindful of the spiritual needs of their emigrated countrymen, came

from Norway, the colonists sensed that here were disinterested friends, men dedicated to a calling. These were leaders they could trust, and they turned to them.

With this dual motivation, then, a yearning for the consolations of the faith they had been reared in and a willingness to put their trust in consecrated leaders of their own flesh and blood, the Norwegian immigrants rallied to their pastors. Under their leadership they organized congregations and founded synodical groups.

From the beginning there had been two church tendencies among the immigrants. One, which in large part grew out of the work of the great reformer Hans Nielsen Hauge in Norway, stressed low-church practices and was loosely organized. The other, which was a direct heir of the established Lutheran state church, stressed doctrine, and was firmly organized. The latter group, led by "university men" (graduates of Oslo University), organized the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (usually referred to as the Norwegian Synod) in 1853. This rapidly became a strong and compact synodical body. This was the group which founded Luther College.

The pioneer pastors traveled far and wide organizing congregations. But where was the manpower to be found to serve them? As the stream of immigration broadened and deepened the problem became more and more acute. A few men

came from Norway to augment the clerical forces already here, but not enough by far to meet the demand for pastors. In this as in other matters, the pioneers soon found that they must rely on their own efforts. So they decided to educate their own men.

One of the strongest motives in organizing a college, therefore, was the desire to train young men for entrance, after a three-year seminary course, into the ministry. Only thus, it was felt, could the need for pastors be met. A second strong motive, especially among the laity, was the desire for a school where the "young people" of the church might receive higher training. Whatever the prime motive, all were agreed that a school should be started; such a movement the pioneers were prepared to support.

In 1857 the first convention of the young Norwegian Synod was held west of the Mississippi, at Washington Prairie, Pastor U. V. Koren's charge, six miles southeast of Decorah. Seven pastors and twenty-nine lay delegates, representing eighteen congregations, were present. Two pastors were unable to come. The average age of the nine clergymen was thirty-four years. On October 10 the convention resolved that the church should establish its own institution of learning and that a "University Fund" for this purpose should be gathered forthwith.

The same resolution provided that until the ac-

tual construction of a physical plant, the interest on the funds raised should be used to establish a "Norwegian theological professorship" at Concordia College and Seminary, St. Louis, then the chief institution of the Missouri Synod, and to aid such Norwegian students as might be sent there for training. The Norwegian Synod pastors had been impressed by the strength of the Missouri Synod and the quality of the instruction at their seminary. Three Norwegian students entered Concordia Seminary in 1858. Laur. Larsen, later first president of Luther College, was appointed the Norwegian theological professor and entered on his duties in 1859. But when the Civil War broke out and disturbances occurred in St. Louis, he and the Norwegian students returned home.

It is of some significance that the decision to found a school was taken when the Norwegian Synod met at Washington Prairie where the 31-year-old U. V. Koren was pastor. Koren was a man of firm convictions, clear insight, and practical ability. Four years later, when Larsen and his scholars returned from St. Louis, Koren realized, as did most of the leaders, that the time had come to establish a school up north. He had already raised large sums for the school — more than any other pastor up to that time. He now characteristically faced up to practical realities. If there was to be a school, it would have to be located somewhere. He wanted it among his congregations,

which at that time were spread over much of Winneshiek, Allamakee, and parts of Clayton, Fayette, and Chickasaw counties, as well as southern Minnesota.

Koren accordingly obtained an option on thirty-two acres of land, on a bluff overlooking the Upper Iowa River in northwest Decorah, and went to the church convention in June to present the claim of Decorah as a site for the college. Building materials, it was said, were readily available in Decorah; the city had a pleasant and healthful situation; it was west of the Mississippi and would be almost a central point amidst the growing Norwegian population; and, with the coming of the railroad, it would be easily accessible. So, over the rival claims of La Crosse, Madison, and Janesville, Wisconsin, Decorah was selected.

Some thought ten acres of land would be more than sufficient. One suggested the purchase of a large farm so that students, by working there, could become fitted for "practical life." Others thought students could get enough exercise by chopping wood, doing some gardening, and looking after the cattle and horses which would be required. Beyond that they would need their time for studying. Finally, however, Koren was authorized to purchase the 32 acres. His efforts had been crowned with success. More than any other individual, he was responsible for the establishment of Luther on its beautiful Decorah campus.

Once the decision had been made, measures were taken to get the institution under way. But suitable quarters could not be found in Decorah. For two years, however, a parsonage had stood vacant at Halfway Creek, about thirteen miles north of La Crosse, waiting for the pastor whom the young Synod had been unable to supply. It was felt that Laur. Larsen, who had been named president of the school, and Friedrich A. Schmidt, his colleague, could serve the congregations which had built the parsonage at the same time as they conducted the college. It was therefore decided that the school should be located temporarily at Halfway Creek. Here instruction began on Wednesday, September 4, 1861.

In his carefully kept record of the first school year, Larsen distinguished between "old" and "new" students. The old students were those he had had at Concordia College and Seminary and who now continued their education under him. The new students were those enrolled for the first time. The young men were from sixteen to twenty-six years old and averaged twenty years. The older ones formed the equivalent of the freshman year in college, the new ones a combined junior and senior year in high school. The subjects were Latin, Greek, German, Norwegian, English, history, religion, algebra, penmanship, singing, arithmetic, and geography. The day began at 5:30 a.m. and ended for all at 10 p.m.

Conditions were primitive and crowded that first year. The parsonage housed the Larsens and their two children; the Schmidts and their one child; Christian Nilsen, who was the steward, with his wife, one child, and Mrs. Nilsen's mother; and eleven students — in all twenty-two persons. There were home-made benches and tables. "Breakfast was served to the assembled household in the kitchen, where morning devotions were also held. But in the morning washing took place, of necessity, outside under the open sky." Yet, in retrospect, several students later spoke of these early days as some of the happiest in their lives.

In the summer of 1862 the college was moved to Decorah. Bag and baggage, the belongings of the college and the two professors were loaded in ten lumber wagons and hauled to La Crosse. There the travelers boarded a Mississippi steamboat to Lansing, Iowa. On July 31, after another trip in lumber wagons, the party reached Decorah.

Here they found temporary quarters in a building later known as the St. Cloud Hotel, opposite the court house in the heart of downtown Decorah. Once more the school was crowded, for the enrollment more than doubled. The college carried on downtown until 1865. In October of that year it moved to the new campus, where it had constructed its own building, a four-story and basement structure 126 feet long. The main section was 52 feet wide and a north wing, 44 feet.

A south wing was added nine years later, in 1874.

A small bakery and a brick stable were also erected; four large cisterns were constructed; a well was dug; and a hydraulic ram was installed to raise water from a spring to a reservoir next to the kitchen. There was grading, leveling, and seeding yet to be done. Such was the college plant when the first Main Building was dedicated on October 14, 1865. A long procession paraded from town to the site of the new structure; the American and Norwegian flags headed the march and were also displayed from the building. The occasion drew the largest crowd of Norwegians to meet in one spot in this country at that time.

The speakers sketched the trials of those who had led the undertaking, outlined the course to be followed by the institution, and voiced fervent hopes for the future. "While a terrible Civil War was raging in our land," said one, "while our people were afflicted in many places by crop failure, high prices, and heavy burdens, means were procured, often in a marvelous manner, and foot by foot this building rose. Now . . . it stands here before our eyes. We must say indeed: A wondrous event has come to pass; truly, 'the Lord hath done great things for us.'" The work of the college, this speaker continued, was to go forward "with positive contempt and aversion for all superficial knowledge, all sham culture, all coveting of praise and honor before men."

Another said that those who united in establishing the school would find that "their children and children's children, throughout generations to come, may derive the most momentous benefit . . . through the service of men who have been trained here." President Larsen, looking forward to greatly superior facilities after the early years in crowded, cramped, and primitive quarters, admonished the students to "guard the right spirit; guard and keep the spirit of humility."

The closing prayer was warm and appealing:

> Hitherto Thou hast so mercifully helped us when we called upon Thee — helped us even beyond what we could ask or understand. Oh, do Thou so help us still! Should we be sluggish in prayer for this school, then wake Thou us, wake us ever more and more to zeal and loyalty; shouldst Thou send hard times and heavy trials which might cripple our labors, then help Thou, as Thou hast helped hitherto in such times of need; and let them ever be put to shame who would rejoice over our misfortune. And now, O God, we entrust ourselves to Thee; save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; nourish and exalt it from age to age, and let Thy loving kindness be over us even in such measure as we trust in Thee. . . . Hear our prayers today; hear us always when we pray that Thy truth may be preserved for us and for our children, and that the work of this school may honor it.

The culmination of years of discussion and effort had been reached. From its humble beginnings in an overcrowded parsonage, the college began its fifth year in an educational plant that

was much better than average, with an enrollment of eighty-one, divided among four classes in the college and two in the preparatory department.

The college was well under way, but it had not surmounted all its difficulties. The tremendous inflation of the Civil War had caused the cost of the undertaking to soar far beyond original estimates. Instead of the estimated $30,000, the plant had cost $87,000. The college faced its first financial crisis. In 1865-66 it had been necessary to borrow money at interest as high as 18 per cent. In 1867 the president of the Synod wrote: "The University Fund is a bottomless pit. Last year we owed $25,000. This year $13,000 was received in addition to the sale of the old building [downtown], yet we owe $30,000." There was a constant struggle extending into the '70s to raise funds. But the steady increase in attendance to 229 in 1874 assured the college of a widening base of support; the debt was retired. Moreover, graduates of the school, beginning in 1866, began to go out in increasing numbers.

Life in the early college was different from that of today. Students were all of the male sex, no women being admitted until 75 years later. Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota were still largely frontier states, or just emerging from pioneer conditions. Decorah had been founded in 1849, only thirteen years before the college moved there. The town had grade schools, but no high school — a

condition common in a large part of the tri-state area. Early colleges, therefore, had to take students at the scholastic level on which they found them. The very young mingled with older, mature men seeking an education. Preparatory departments were the rule rather than the exception. Thus, the University of Wisconsin maintained its preparatory department from its foundation in 1849 until 1879. Luther College was no exception.

In general the school followed the pattern of Concordia College in St. Louis, which in turn was modeled on the German *gymnasium,* in which a six-year course leading to the A. B. degree, prepared the student for professional study in the university. This pattern was substantially the same as that of the Latin school of Norway. But President Larsen early pointed out that the demands here were greater than in the mother country, for all students had to master two basic languages, English and Norwegian, instead of only Norwegian, as in Norway. Beginning with the first year there were also requirements in music not found in the mother country. Substantially, however, the curriculum was that of the Latin school, with strong emphasis on the classical languages . . . on Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament; on German, the language of the Lutheran Reformation theologians; on Norwegian, the mother tongue of the Norwegian immigrant;

and on English, the language of his adopted country.

The instruction was thorough; the faculty of young men insisted on high standards. Larsen, himself, had been trained under one of Norway's leading Hebrew scholars. Schmidt was a brilliant young man, who later became a powerful force in the church. Brandt, Landmark, and Siewers were graduates of the University in Oslo, as were others of the early men who served on the faculty. They founded two magazines, one in English, one in Norwegian. In the latter was published the first novel of Norwegian-American pioneer life (Severin Hassel's *Alf Brage, or the Schoolteacher in Minnesota*). They ably supported their young president who stated that it was his "aim that the instruction be thorough; that there be no show or humbug; that everything be pure gold — or, to use a common expression, that it be 'all wool and a yard wide.' "

Although English was used among the students, Norwegian predominated for many years as the medium of instruction. According to A. A. Veblen, who taught at Luther before taking up his duties at the State University of Iowa, English and Norwegian were used in 1877 to about an equal extent among the boys on campus. But baseball was taking hold at Luther and baseball could hardly be played except in English. Veblen, therefore, credits the gradual Americanization of

the college partly to the influence of the national game. He states that by 1881 English had practically displaced Norwegian as the language of the campus except among those of the faculty who had been educated in Norway.

In the very early years sports were simple: running, jumping (forward and backward), wrestling, weight lifting, finger pulling, skating, skiing, and some few exercises on a horizontal bar. Exercise at stated times came from sawing wood. The rooms were heated by stoves and wood had to be sawed for this purpose. At the opening of each school year the students elected a "superintendent of woodcutters." He appointed a foreman for each day of the week and assigned students to work under each foreman. The usual assignment required one hour a week from each student. "We were not given a chance to become dainty or fastidious," writes one alumnus. "We had to saw wood for ourselves and for our teachers, keep our rooms in order, scour knives and forks, and do other minor chores."

President Larsen was concerned lest his charges should fail to get the needed exercise and fresh air. Most of them came from farms, were used to manual labor, and were unaccustomed to habits of study and sedentary life. Larsen stipulated that during leisure hours students should not read or study but should get outside. "Don't become humped over like a question mark," he admonished.

Once a month the buildings were thoroughly cleaned and scrubbed. On this day the boys were given a holiday. In smaller or larger groups, they would set out after breakfast to explore the surrounding country, carrying light provisions with them; would seek out farms where they knew they would be given a warm welcome; and here would have dinner around roaring campfires. These events were so popular that the boys never allowed a month to go by without asking for their holiday.

In 1865-66 a military company was formed to serve in the event of an Indian outbreak. P. S. Reque, one of eleven students who had served in the Civil War, became captain of the company. In 1877 the "Luther College Phalanx" was organized; it had muzzle-loading muskets, belts, cartridges, and cap pouches, and was led by officers with regulation dress swords and belts. It flourished for four years.

A strict timetable of classes, study hours, and recreation periods was observed. There were few deviations from this schedule and few social events to distract the student from his studies. Conditions of travel imposed definite restrictions. For example, not a few students in the very earliest years, after crossing the Mississippi by ferry from Prairie du Chien to McGregor, walked the remaining distance to Decorah. Walking was not yet a lost art. R. J. Wisnaes, who immigrated in

1871, relates in his memoirs how he and other students resorted to the "apostles' horses" to reach places twenty-five miles distant from Decorah.

Many students who had come from a distance, therefore, remained in Decorah during the Christmas holidays; or, if fortunate enough to be invited, they would journey to some fellow student's home in the neighborhood to spend the holidays there. For those who remained at the college, there were always parties arranged by the wives of the faculty members, who also saw to it that some little gift was under the tree for each young man in the group.

Some of the faculty wives, like Mrs. Diderikke Brandt, were especially active in arranging little gatherings, such as Sunday afternoon coffees, at which the boys shyly wore off some of their bashfulness and were made aware of some of the niceties of decorum. Mrs. Brandt's name is also associated with the "Comitia Dumriana" (the assemblage of the silly fair, as they were humorously called). This was a group of nine young women, daughters of pastors and professors, who had their headquarters at the Brandt home on the campus in 1873-74 and were instructed during the year by several of the college teachers.

Peer Strømme, perhaps the foremost Norwegian-American humorist, commented on the nine in *Halvor,* his delightful novel of his years at Luther College (translated from the Norwegian by

Inga Bredesen Norstog and David T. Nelson in 1960). He stated that

> all these young ladies were so pleasant and attractive that they made poor Halvor's heart ache. When this bevy of girls, or Comitia Dumriana, as they were called, strolled down the road, he could not keep his eyes off them. It was not that he was especially concerned over any one member in particular; but collectively — taken all together — they were irresistible.

Apparently they did not have the same attraction for those directing the college's destiny as they did for Halvor. For Luther College all but forgot them and continued on its way as a college for men, much too preoccupied with the pressing tasks before it to give thought at this time to the education of women.

An American School Emerges

The changes which took place during the early years appear, in retrospect, to have come swiftly. Many students, after the school had moved to Iowa, walked the fifty miles from McGregor to Decorah; but this traverse became only a memory when the railroad crossed the Mississippi and was extended to Calmar and western Iowa. Even the bumpy wagon ride which students, seated on their trunks, took from Conover to Decorah was relegated to the past when a spur of the railroad was constructed to Decorah in 1869.

Many a young man in the early days came dressed in homespun; "store clothes" were a later development. Quite a few students were relatively new arrivals from Norway, often with a fair educational background from the mother country, but with little knowledge of English and little understanding of American conditions. For these a year or two at the college to reorient themselves was frequently all that was desired. Some of the students came from older, more established settlements. Thus, in 1874-75, a contingent of five came from Chicago, says one alumnus, "readily distinguished from the other students because of their neat and well fitting clothes, the cut of their

hair, evidently by a professional barber, not by Nils Flaten at 5¢ per cut, and that indefinite air of the large city, which the Romans referred to as *frons urbana*."

Almost imperceptibly from day to day the school changed. It changed just as the countryside and the social structure about it changed. The frontier was always a moving, flexible thing; it rapidly left northeastern Iowa behind and swept ever westward. As it moved on, the settlements in its wake took on the characteristics of older communities. Luther College, too, changed and gradually lost some of the features of its pioneer beginnings.

The problem of training men to go on to theological study, which had seemed paramount to most of the early founders of the institution, was no longer so urgent. Most of the early graduates had gone into the ministry. Out of 128 graduates from 1866 to 1881, ninety became clergymen. In addition, a considerable number who did not take an A. B. degree went on to theological study and became pastors. To a considerable extent, the needs of the parish ministry had been met.

The other thirty-eight graduates up to 1881 had entered a variety of fields, some going on to graduate study and entering the professions. These men were fulfilling the hopes of those who from the beginning had envisioned the college not solely as a place for pre-theological study, but as a

school for all the young people of the church. But it was to take years before this idea came to full fruition.

The early leaders spoke of the school as a "university," and the funds raised for the institution were known for more than twenty years as the "University Fund." This "university" was to consist of the college proper — a six-year course leading to the B. A. degree; a teachers' training department to give special training to prospective teachers, especially prospective parish teachers; and, to cap the educational structure, a seminary with a three-year course in theological studies to prepare men for the ministry. This was the original plan.

A two-year teachers' training department was organized in 1865. Subsequently, the course was lengthened to three years. The first graduates of the three-year normal course went out in 1871. But, although considerable effort was expended on the department, it was never popular, and attendance languished. It was discontinued in 1886.

The college had close ties with the Missouri Synod, whose headquarters were in St. Louis, Missouri. Early graduates of the college were sent to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for three years of theological study. For a variety of reasons, the arrangement was not wholly satisfactory. In 1876 the Norwegian Synod decided to establish its own theological seminary. Although

there were still proponents of the original plan of organizing the seminary at Decorah as part of the "university idea" (as was done by the Swedes at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois), other influences prevailed. The decision was perhaps motivated largely by two practical considerations: Luther College was already crowded and unable to house all its students; and a large orphanage in Madison, Wisconsin, which stood vacant, was immediately available. The seminary therefore was located not at Decorah, but at Madison. Thus the original "university idea" was considerably curtailed, and by the mid-1880's it was clear that Luther was on the way to becoming a typical American college.

In 1881 the course of study was lengthened from six to seven years. More time was needed, it was felt, to prepare men adequately for future study. President Larsen stated explicitly that the objective was to increase the requirements for graduation; he was also aware of the need for more science courses. Moreover, the increased requirements were in line with a general tightening up of college curriculums as the Middle West became a more settled society. Pioneer conditions were a thing of the past. The college had to keep abreast of the times and make its curriculum equal to the best found in similar institutions.

The change was further implemented by making the three lowest classes into a separate prepar-

atory department in 1889. Eventually a fourth year was added. But with the development of high schools throughout the area, the need of a preparatory department disappeared; and eventually, but only over the protests of its supporters, the department was discontinued in 1928. Long before this, however, it had lost the importance attached to it in the early years.

Meanwhile, many other developments were making the institution an American college rather than a transplanted Latin school. Music was a part of its curriculum in its very first year. Gradually music won a large place among the extra-curricular student activities. The first vocal group was organized in 1869, the first orchestra in 1877, and the first band in 1878. Music has ever since attracted many of the most talented students. The early organizations soon began to make public appearances, and gradually they won an outstanding position on campus. The best known is the Luther College Concert Band, which has toured from coast to coast at home and made three international tours to Europe.

Baseball early assumed first place among college sports. Originally it was played between teams representing rival groups in the student body. The first organized college nine of record dates from 1872. Occasionally games were played with town teams from Decorah, Waukon, Ridgeway, Fort Atkinson, and Cresco, the major contest

usually being the one with Decorah on May 17, the Norwegian national holiday which corresponds to the American July 4. In 1891 intercollegiate contests were introduced. These stirred tremendous interest and led to the first extensive tour by a Luther ball club in 1893. On its trip the team did not lose a game. The *Iowa Daily Citizen* (Iowa City) for May 9, 1893, in its account of one of the games with the State University of Iowa, stated:

> Nine baseball players, one substitute and a manager, all of Norwegian descent, came in on the night train Saturday, and put up at the St. James. On Sunday they sat around the lobby of the hotel, looking curiously at all the diamond-front traveling men; and when the church bells rang, found their way, as was their custom, to a place of worship. Two of them, the toughs of the party, smoked cigarettes, and one of them was so far gone, in their eyes, as to smoke a cigar.
>
> Several times the manager was approached with a view to ascertaining what he thought of the playing qualities of his team. . . . He did not care to talk baseball, nor did any of the team. But when they donned their old-fashioned red uniforms and took their place at the bat or in the field, they played ball, and that with terrific effect. . . .
>
> They went at it in such a matter-of-fact manner that it was really amusing to watch them. When the game was finished, they gathered up their bats — three in number — and quietly found their way to the hotel. They raised not a cry of triumph, not even as much as raised their hats.

The 12-0 Luther victory seemed a bit incredible

and the Iowa team invited the visitors to stay over for a second game. A telephone call was put through to President Larsen, an administrator not easily stirred by student extracurricular activities, and surprisingly enough, permission was given. The second game went into the ninth inning with the university leading 3 to 0. Then Luther batted in 8 runs. Speculation arose as to whether these Norwegians were some strange breed of supermen who had been playing possum up to that inning.

Of course the university has long since evened the series with Luther. Oscar L. Olson, first baseman, who later became president of Luther College, has stated that the members of the team were not so naive as the news article indicated. The incident, however, has gone down as one of the colorful legends associated with the long history of baseball at the college.

In 1877, through the influence of the English colony in Decorah, a modified form of English rugby and soccer football was introduced. It flourished until 1891 when the American game was introduced. But intercollegiate football was banned in 1897; intramural football still continued. The intercollegiate game was not officially resumed until 1919.

In 1886 when the first gymnasium was completed, turning became popular; it has flourished ever since that date. In 1891 the first tennis court

was made ready, but there is no record of intercollegiate matches until 1904. Track events interested students in an informal way, but the first organized field meet was not held until 1900 and the first intercollegiate meet two years later.

In 1892 the Luther College Athletic Association was organized. From time to time modifications have been made in its structure, but its main outlines have remained. Fundamentally, the formation of the society was a recognition of the maturity of college athletics and of their place in the college's total program. This was a development the early founders could hardly have envisioned, for it was a move quite foreign to the Latin school concept of their European background which had served as a measuring rod in the past.

Various literary, debating, and social societies flourished. Some had "Journals," handwritten, that attracted considerable attention. Some used the Norwegian language, some English. Several built up considerable libraries for the use of their members, most of these eventually being incorporated into the college library.

The most famous of the societies was, characteristically enough, Niffelheim. This group, which flourished from 1874 to 1889, developed, says one of its members, into a "republic" of free souls devoted to Lady Nicotine, protectress of the more daring who sought liberation from the rather rigid routine of school rules.

Niffelheim was the first society to introduce daily papers and weekly and monthly magazines at Luther College. She was the first society to inaugurate trial by jury and regular court proceedings. . . . Do you call to mind how we replenished our treasury by producing the very first small original farce written at Luther College? . . . And the famous court cases we had! I remember one especially of how a certain member refusing to pay a fine for having expectorated wildly was in due course sued by the members of the cabinet. The lawyers were the most illustrious men at the college. . . . Do you remember how we at one time felt almost convinced that the jury had been bribed? It seems to me that my ears ring even now with the oratorical denouncements uttered on that occasion.

How did we not willingly contribute part of our small means — and indeed we were not rich in those days — toward securing the first cheap carpet at twenty-five cents per yard and curtains of coarse texture, but neat design? We were the first clubroom to have a carpet and curtains. . . . And the feasts we had once or twice a year. . . . The members of the faculty that were smokers were always invited and we indeed felt proud when they deigned to be present. There in Niffelheim we met even the professors under a democratic flag.

These literary and social groups offered an outlet for student initiative and energy. Here were introduced the new ideas that were abroad in the college students' world. The new was constantly challenging the old.

Journalism in one form or another appealed strongly to students. Five years after the college opened, a handwritten sheet called *Moderlandet* (The Motherland) appeared. This was promptly

parodied by *Mamalandet* (The Mamaland). Other early handwritten papers were *The Knight Without Fear or Reproach, The Fly,* and *Svein the Fearless.* In 1878, students sought permission to set up a press and publish a paper. But a faculty meeting held that "this was a dangerous experiment." So the matter dragged for several years.

At length, in 1884, *College Chips,* an English semi-monthly, appeared. Its title was taken, appropriately enough, from the regular student chore of sawing and splitting wood for the stoves which were the only means of heating the building. Its editors stated:

> English is now unquestionably the reigning language of Luther College. It is true, Norwegian is yet used almost equally as much in class as before; but English is the language generally spoken outside of class and English is almost exclusively the language of all our literary societies. English has constantly been gaining ascendancy and is now predominant. We regard this a change for the better.

Defending the issuance of the journal, the editors modestly said: "We have thought that a paper of this kind might possibly do something in promoting the interests of the college." They then called attention to the motto they had chosen: *Valeat quantum valere potest;* that is, "Let it pass for what it is worth." It was an auspicious start. *Chips* attracted an amazing degree of loyalty. It has now passed the three-quarter-century mark

and in its present newspaper form is more vigorous than ever.

Another step which clearly showed the Americanization taking place at the college was the formation on June 28, 1880, of that typically American organization — an alumni association. True, it was first given a Norwegian name, the Luther College Alumni *Forening*; but *forening* was soon changed to "association." In 1888 the society was incorporated under Iowa law to give it the proper status for handling funds. One of its first objects was to raise an endowment fund for the college. Over the years it has gradually assumed larger responsibilities in college affairs.

The language of the faculty minutes represented typically academic conservatism: the faculty clung to Norwegian until 1915. On the other hand after the college was incorporated under Iowa law in 1865, the minutes of the Board of Trustees were regularly kept in English. This dichotomy of language was found in many aspects of college life. Although Norwegian all but disappeared after World War I, tag ends of the language persist here and there, and many old Norwegian customs and traditions are still cherished.

In 1872 a *Katalog* was issued in Norwegian. It was the first catalog of the college, contained a brief history of the institution, a description of the facilities, a listing of the courses of study, and a complete roster of students from the opening of

the college in 1861. The second catalog was issued in 1883, this time in English. Thereafter it appeared annually until 1954. Apparently among the college constituency there was still a demand for information in Norwegian; accordingly, beginning in 1886 the catalog was issued in both English and Norwegian, a practice continued until 1906.

For more than fifty years no tuition was charged students in the college. The supporting church footed the bill for the school. But a tuition charge for every student in the preparatory department was made beginning in 1889. Meanwhile, to care for services which fell outside the regular budget, various fees were introduced, such as for medical care, music, the library, and the gymnasium. Some means had to be found, the administration discovered, to provide for matters that went beyond the budgets that were regarded as adequate in the first pioneer years.

On May 19, 1889, the Main Building was gutted by fire. Since this was the only major building, its destruction created a crisis. All students save seniors were sent home. During the next school year the college carried on in improvised quarters. Meanwhile, after some debate as to whether the school should be relocated elsewhere, Pastor U. V. Koren's influence was once more decisive, and a new structure was built on the old foundations. The new structure was far more pleasing in design

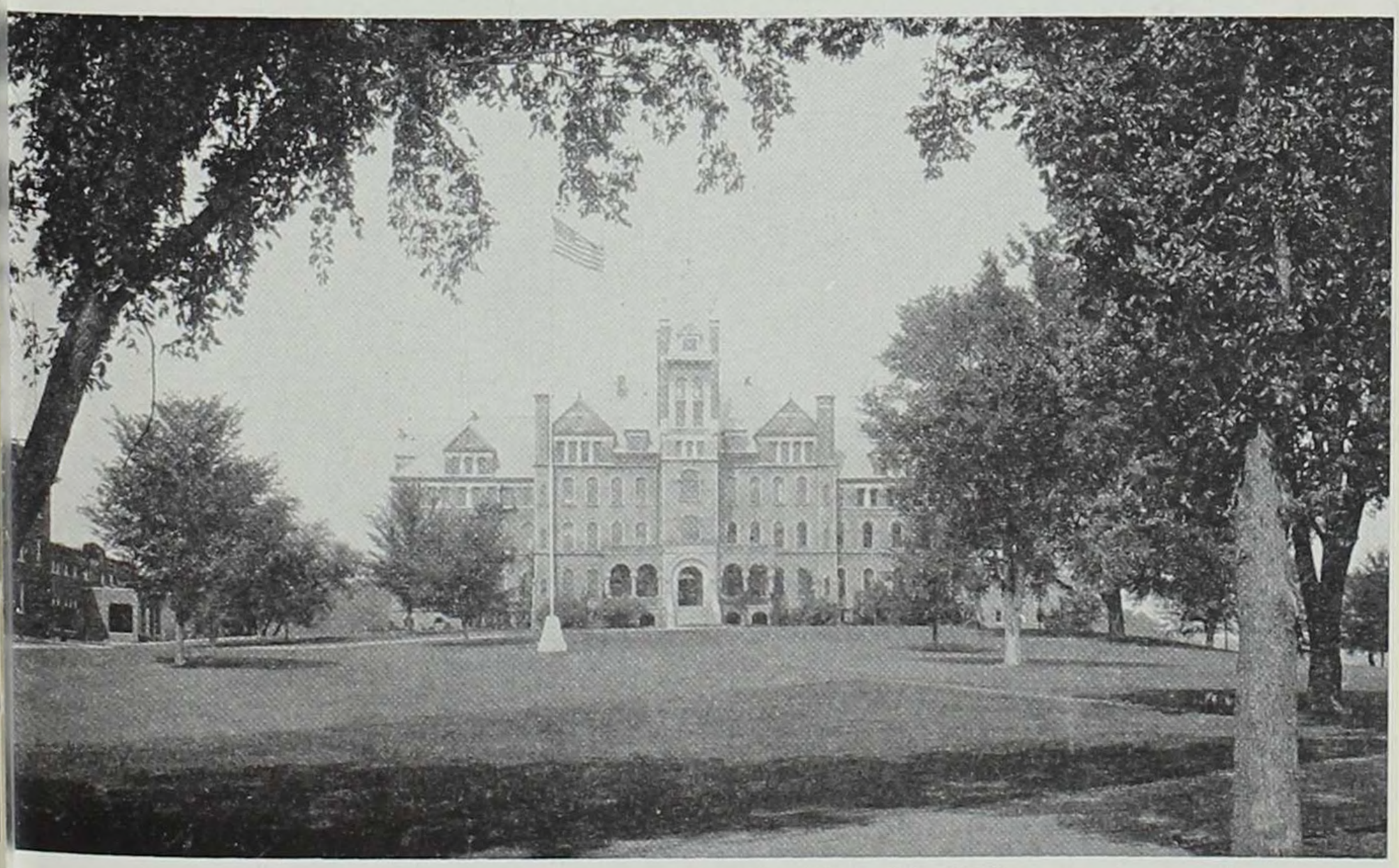
than the old and for fifty-two years remained a cherished landmark.

The city water mains were extended to the campus. A heating plant was built and steam heat replaced the old, dangerous, and inadequate stoves. Some years later, after the city of Decorah had acquired electric lights, electricity was brought to the campus. Through the efforts of the alumni the college in 1901 obtained its own electric power plant, which served for many years. In 1901 a small hospital building was erected.

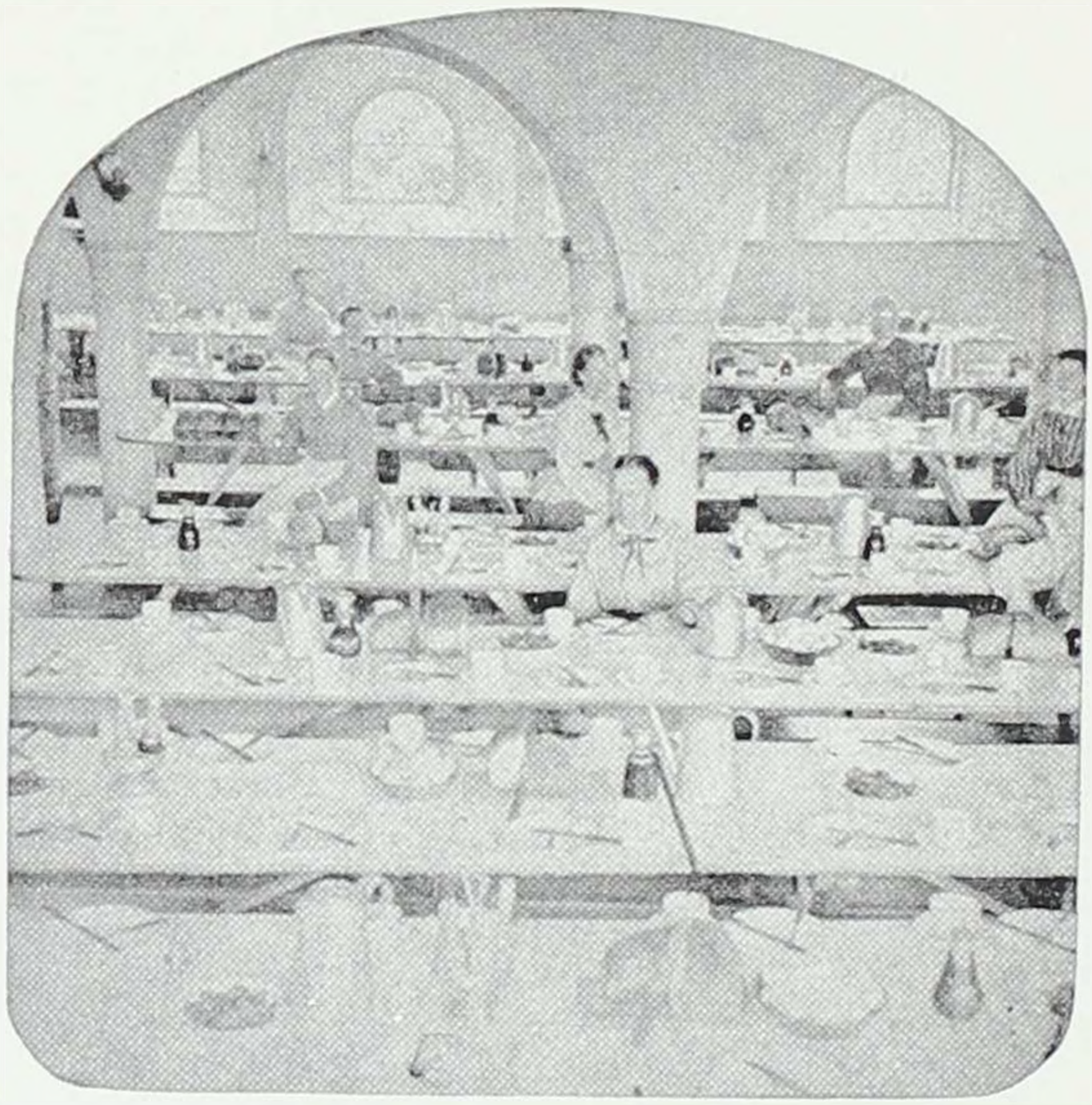
The library, for which an appropriation had been made in the first year of the college's existence, grew slowly but steadily. Students, toiling through the night, saved its 6,000 volumes when fire destroyed the Main Building. Its first printed catalog was issued about 1889. By 1902 it had more than 11,000 volumes. In 1899-1900 it was classified according to the Dewey decimal system; but in 1920 it was reorganized according to the Library of Congress classification system.

In 1877, the college received a gift of 600 birds' eggs. This became the nucleus of the large collection of articles now forming the Norwegian-American Historical Museum. The museum, which attracted little attention at first, began to find new support in the nineties. In this period, especially, the foundation was laid for the large, and now priceless, collection of Norwegian-American magazines and newspapers. These,

First Main Building. Photo taken in 1874 when the south wing (from the small tower at left) was dedicated.



Old Main. Destroyed by fire May 31, 1942.



Dining room in the basement of the first Main Building.

The Faculty in 1869.
Standing, L. to r.: Friedrich A. Schmidt and Nils O. Brandt.
Seated: Gabriel H. Landmark, Lyder Siewers, Knut E. Bergh, and Laur. Larsen.

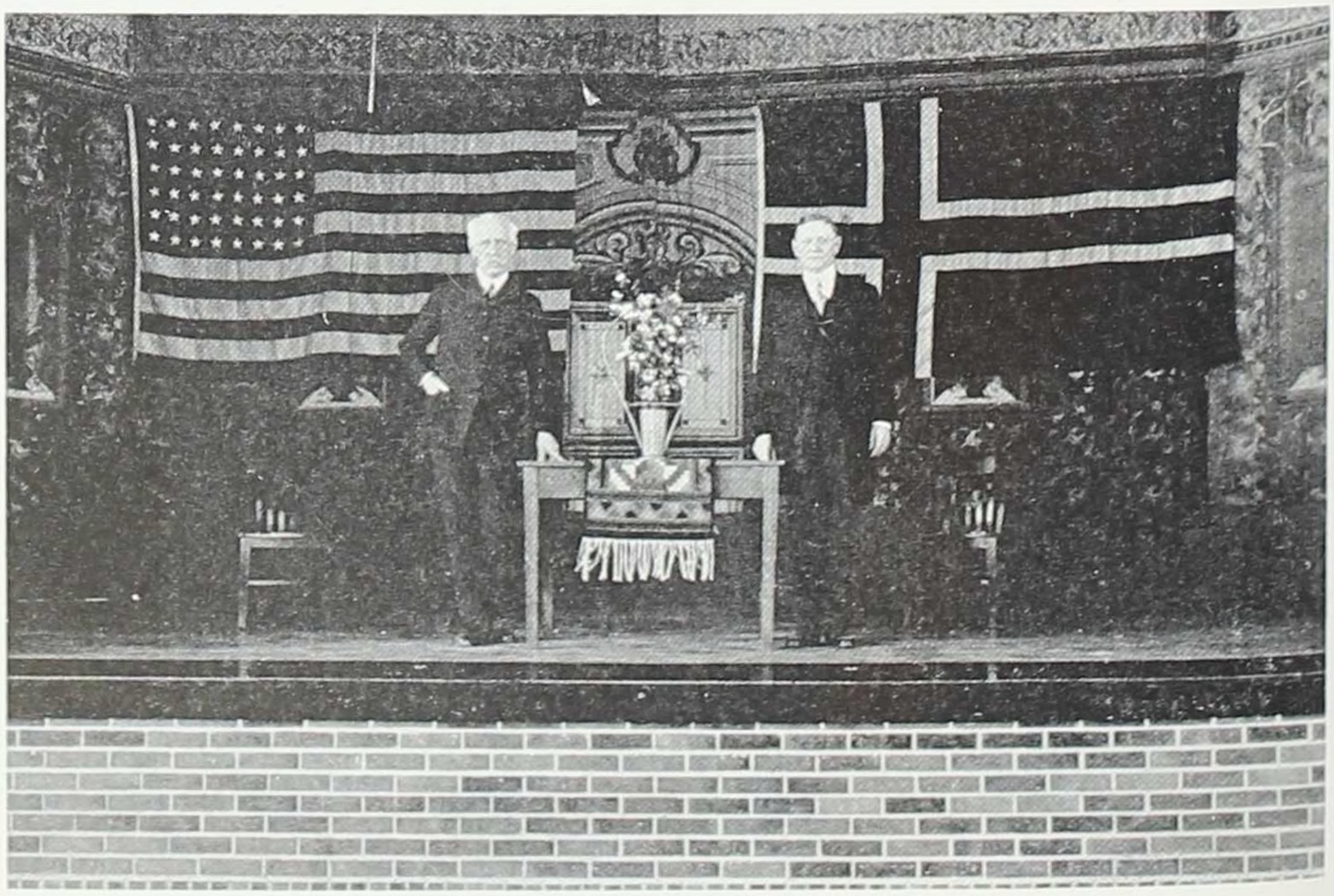
Comitia Dumriana, 1873-74.

Standing, l. to r.: Thora Larsen, Marie Reque, Margrethe Brandt, Emma Larsen, and Rosine Preus. *Seated:* Louise Hjort, Caroline Koren, Henriette Koren, and Mathilda Stub.

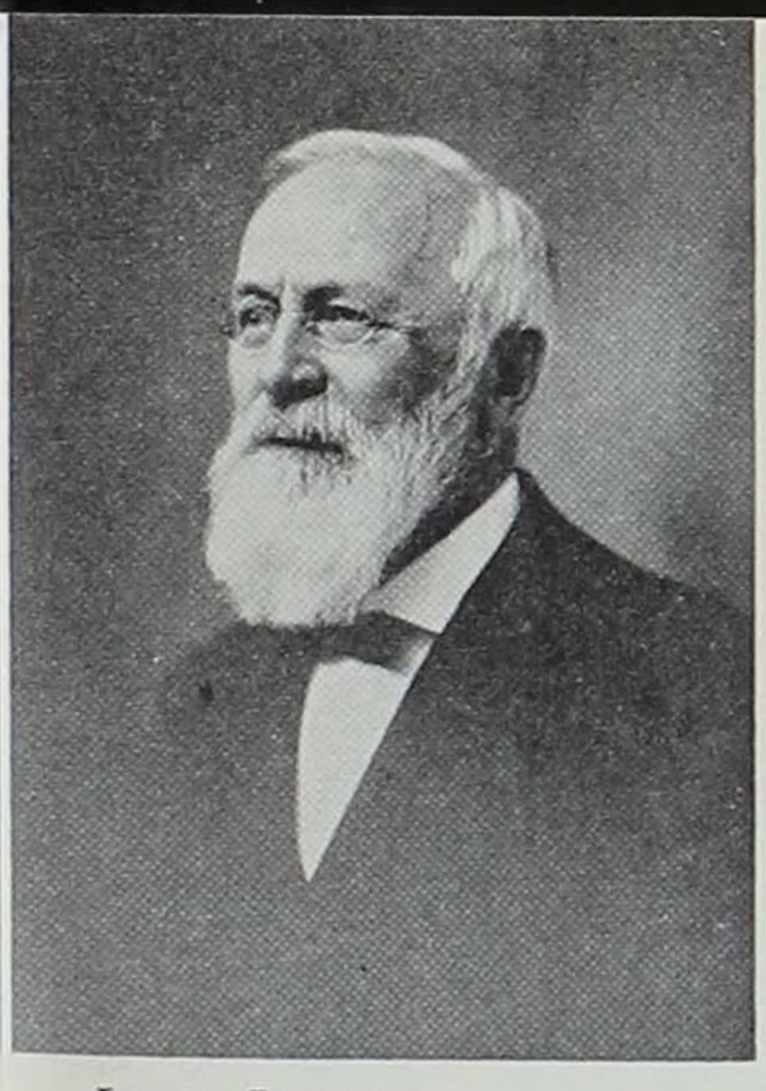
Baseball Team — 1895.

Standing, l. to r.: E. A. Bothne, Eli Lewison, A. J. Torrison, O. J. Akre, and W. L. Torrison. *Seated:* I. A. Thorson, O. S. Opheim, manager, and W. Sihler. *In front:* Otto Junl and Oscar L. Olson. *Not shown:* K. A. Thorsgaard and Hildus Ness.

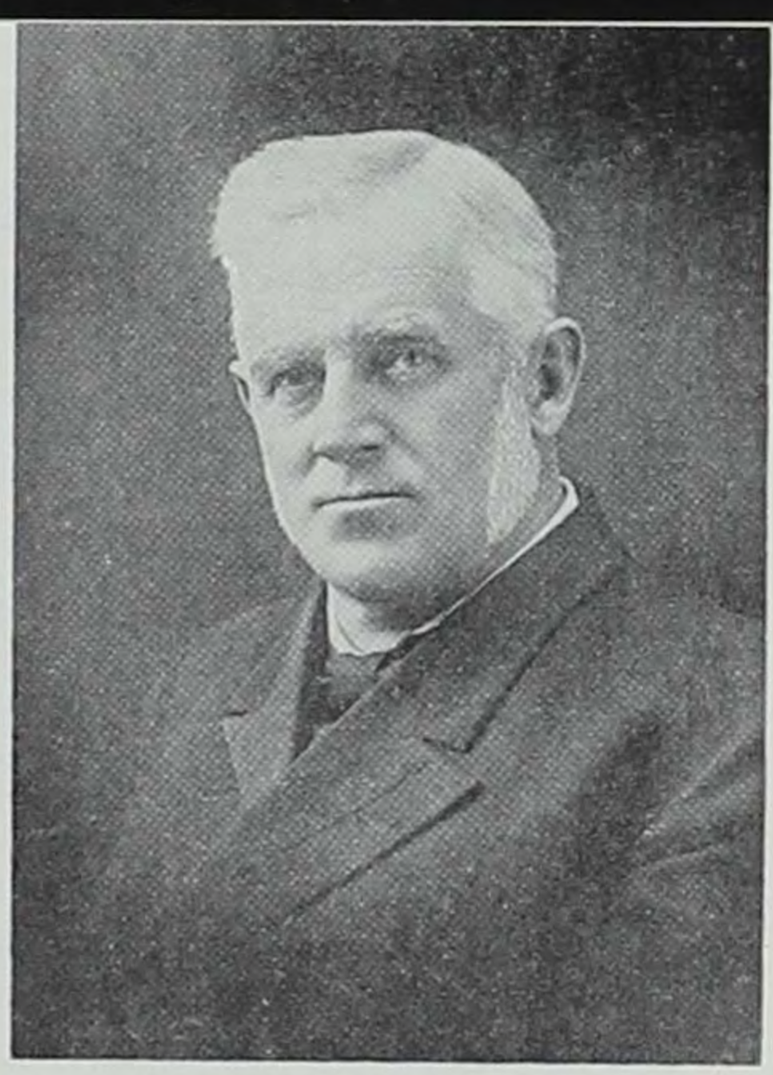
Seventeenth of May — Norway's natal day.
Held on lawn of outdoor log cabin museums on campus.



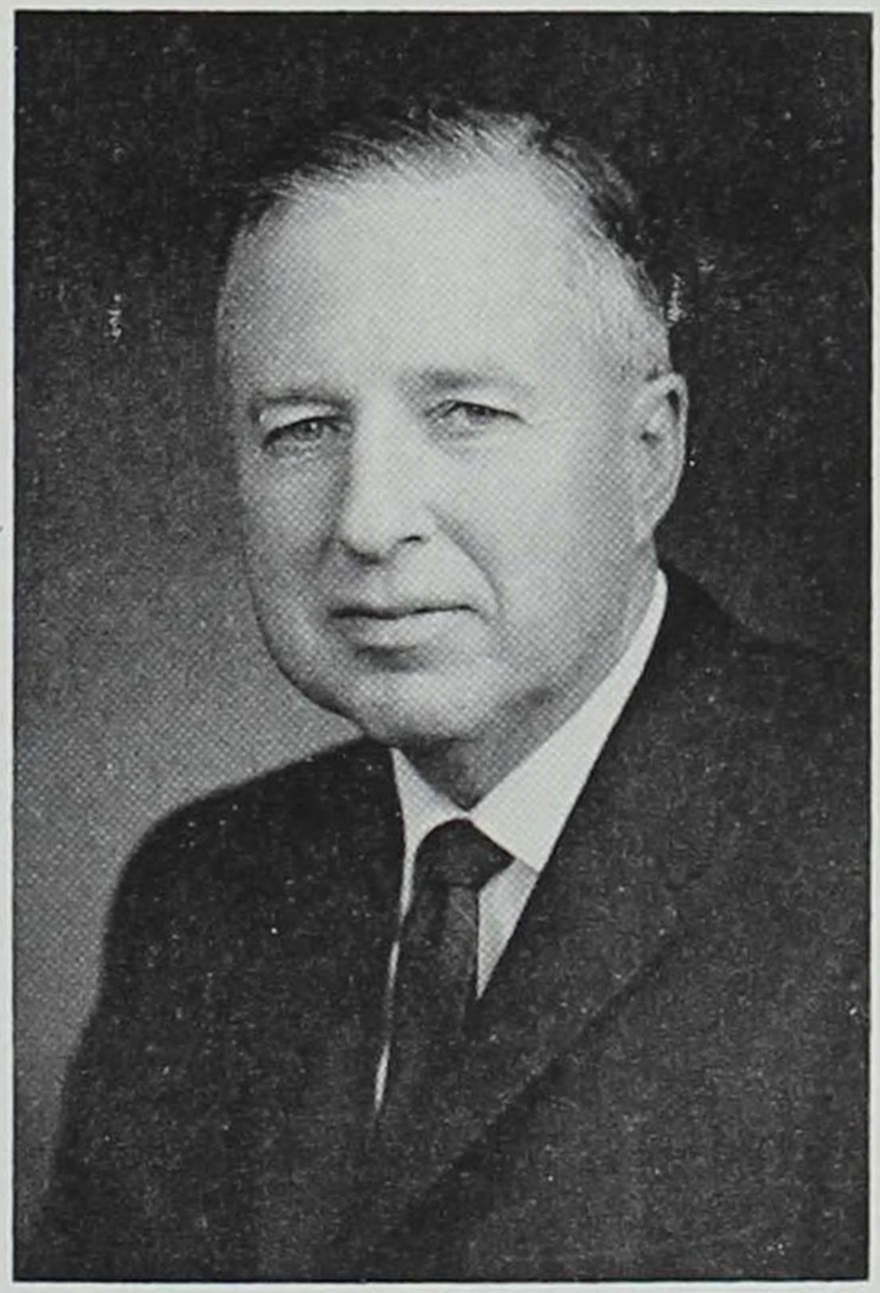
Fridtjof Nansen's visit on May 11, 1928.



LAUR. LARSEN
1861-1902



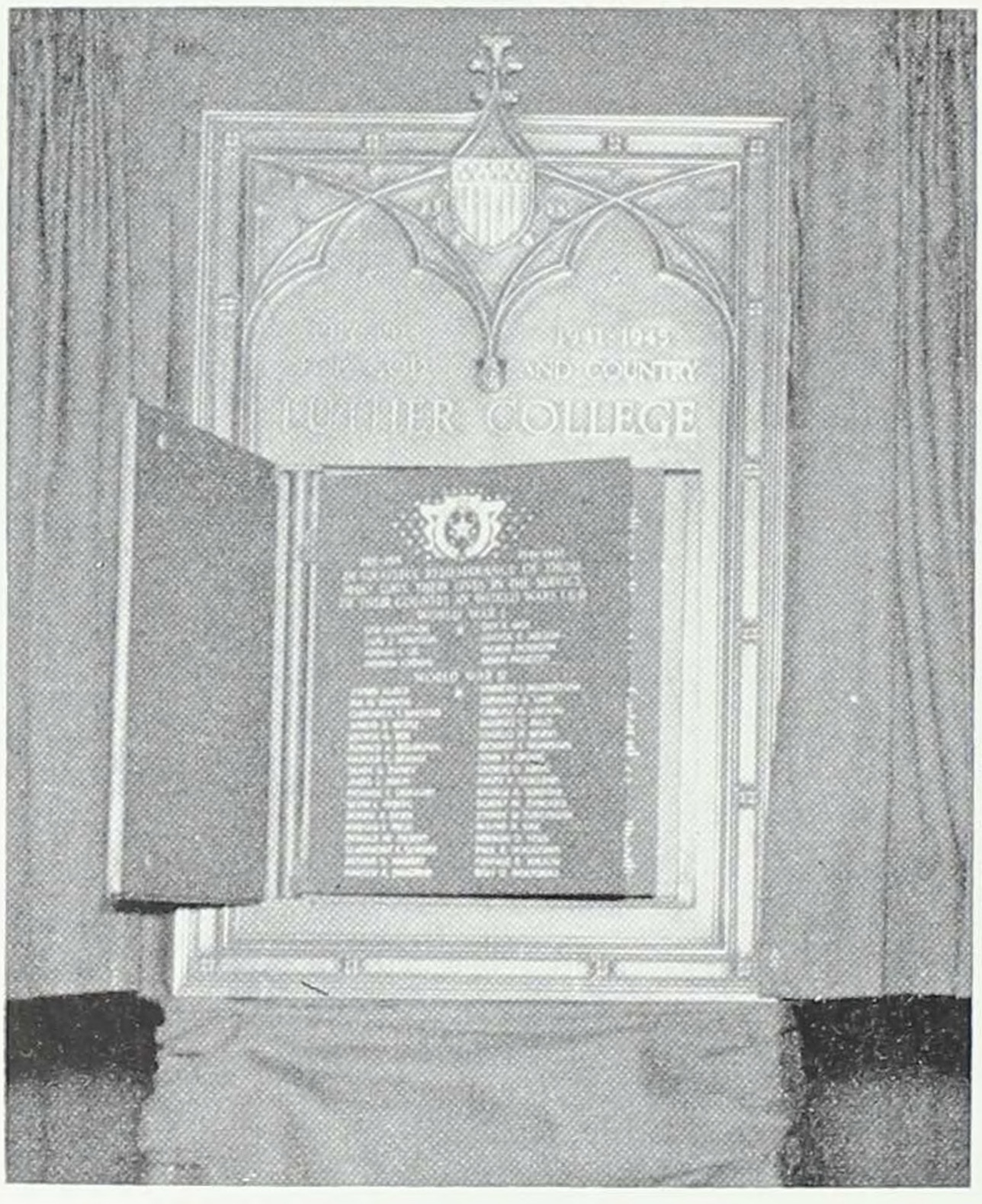
CHRISTIAN K. PREUS
1902-1921



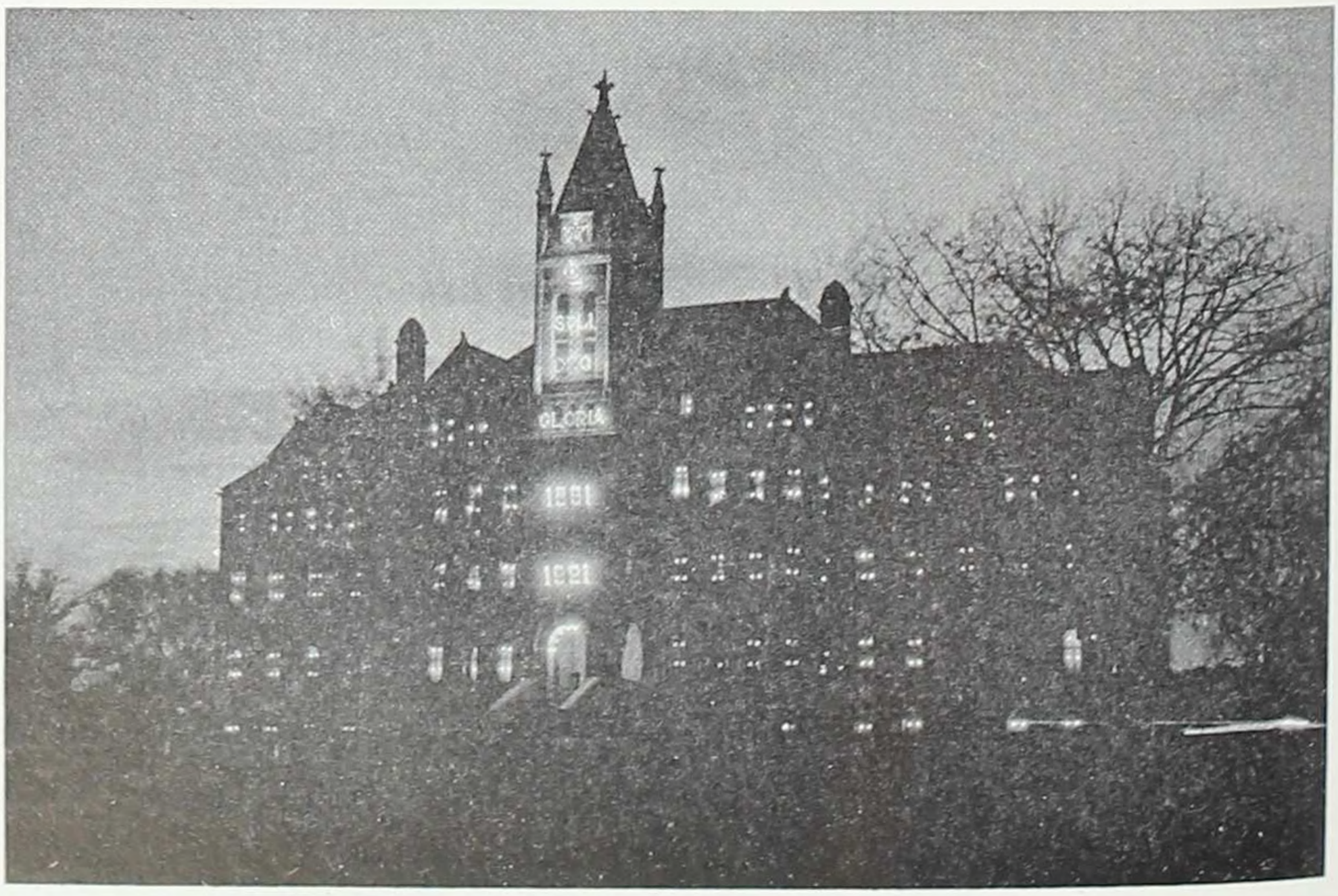
J. W. YLVISAKER
President, 1948—

OSCAR L. OLSON
1921-1932

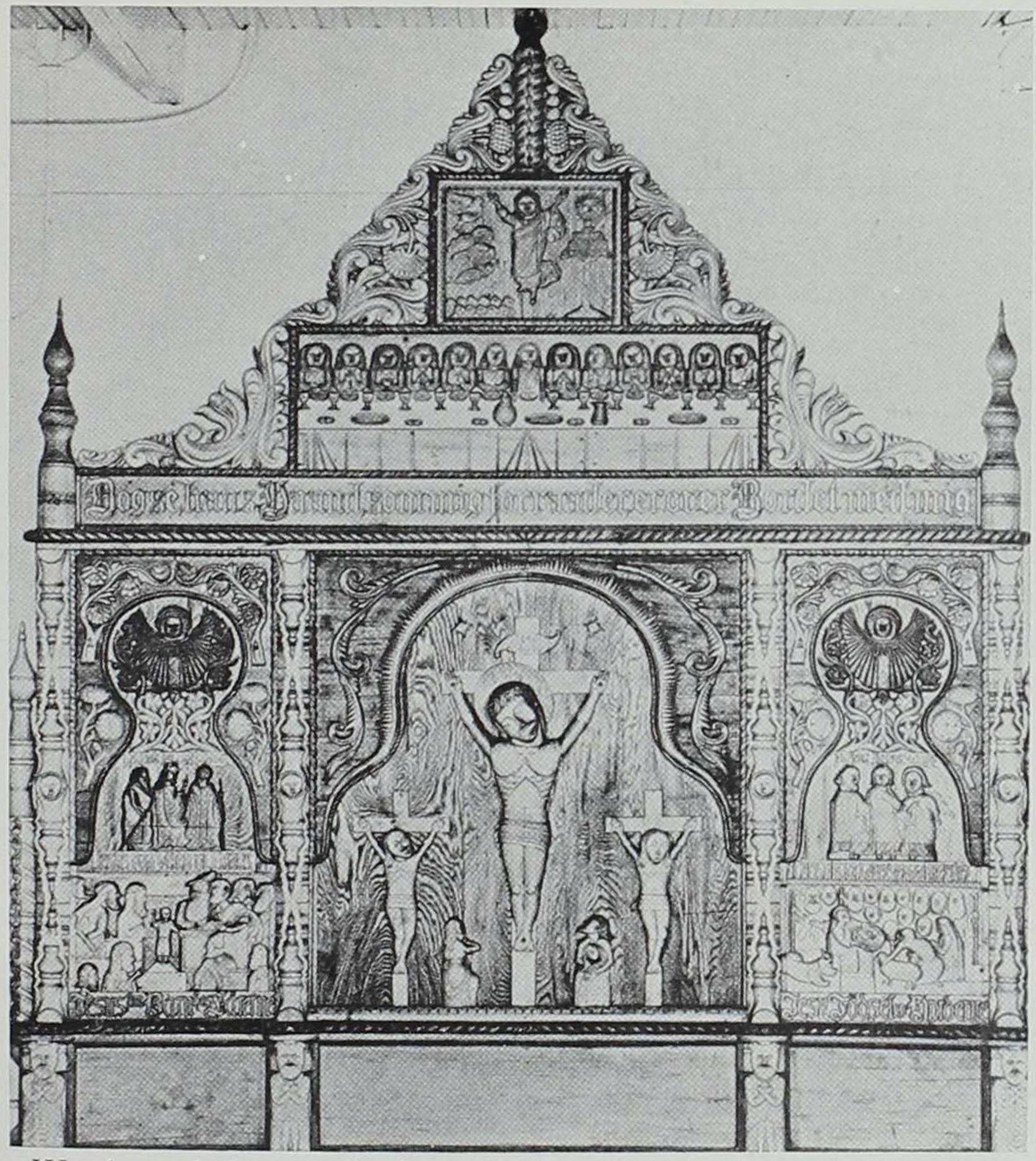
O. J. H. PREUS
1932-1948



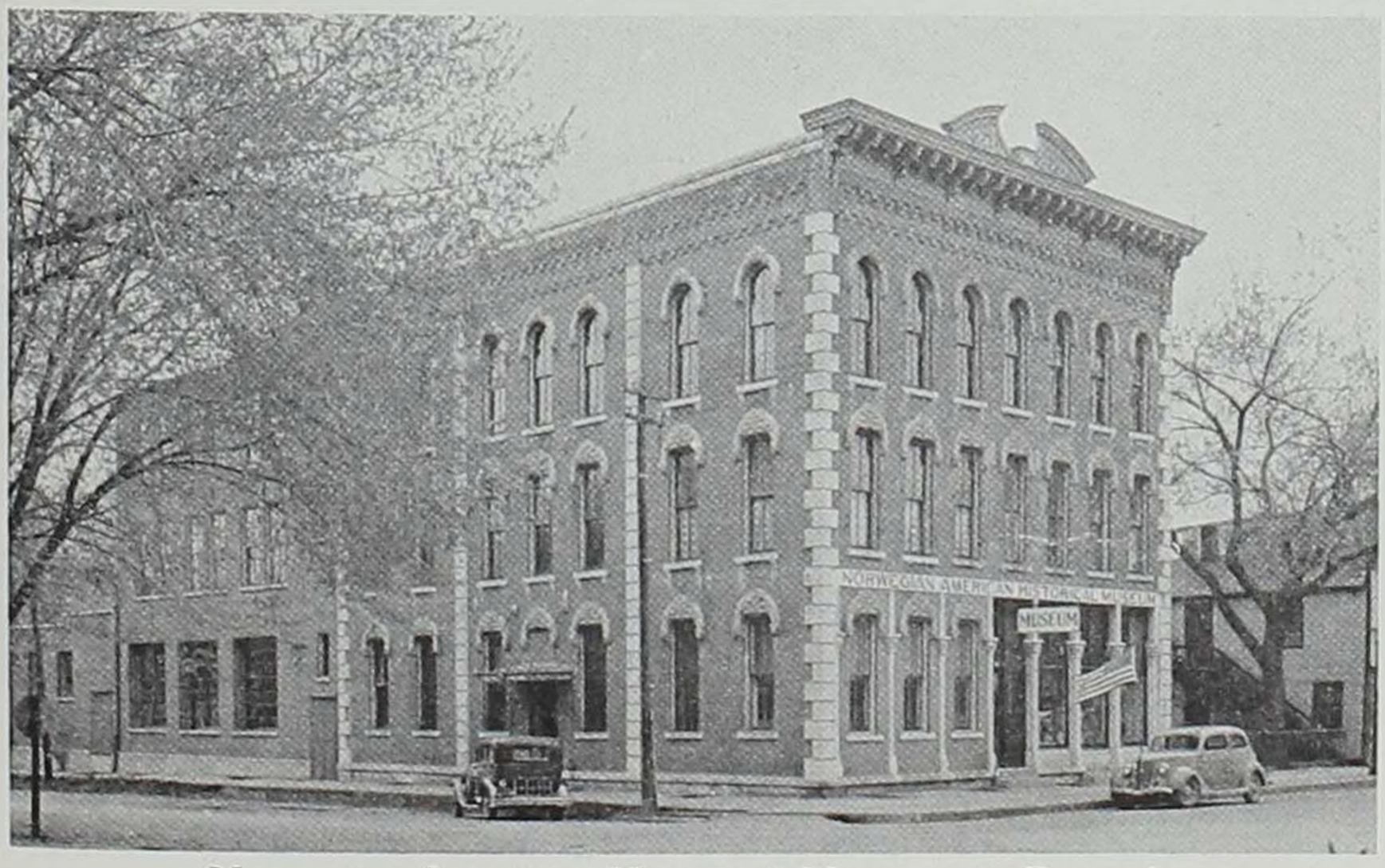
War Memorial
in
New Main



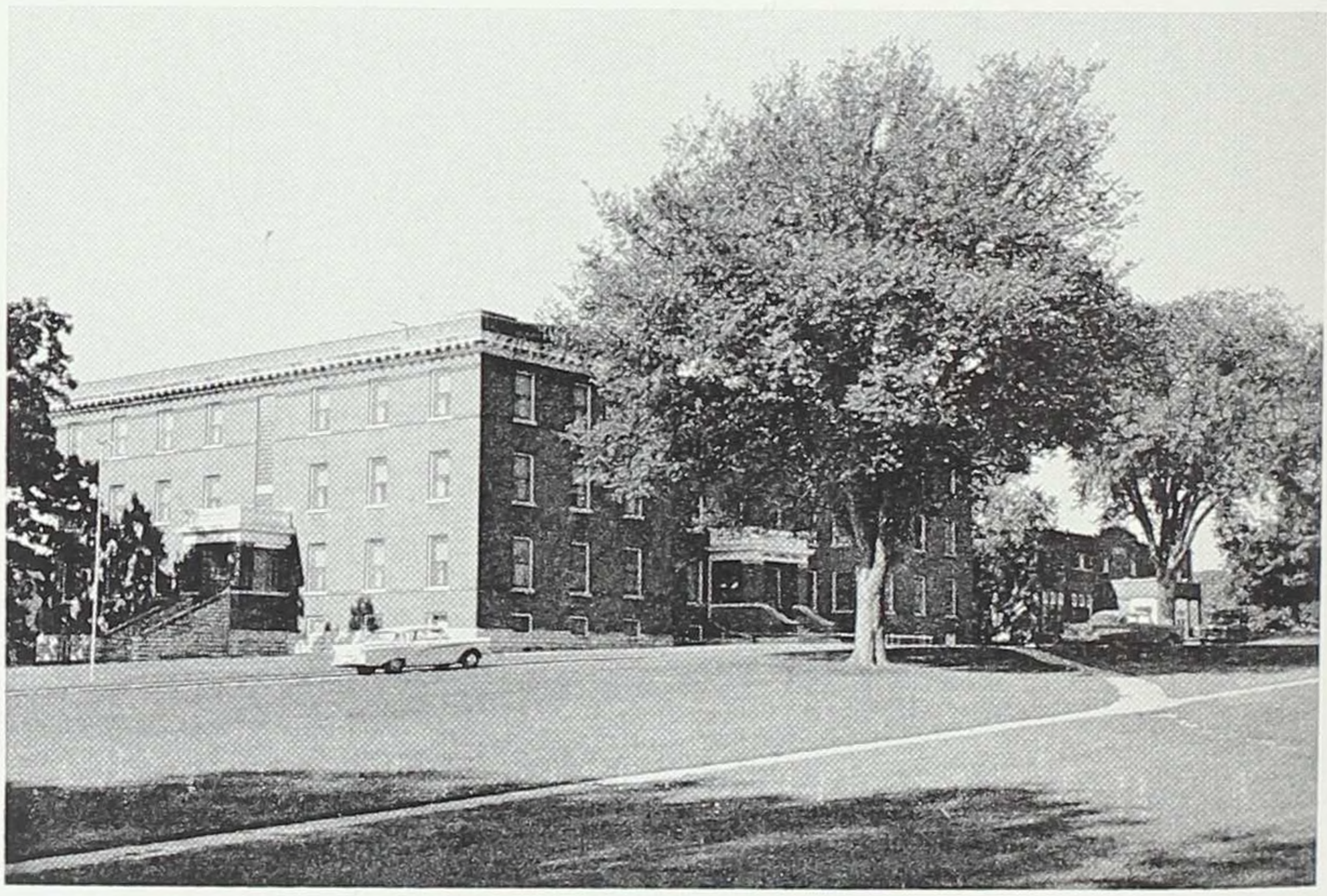
Illumination of Old Main — October 14, 1921.



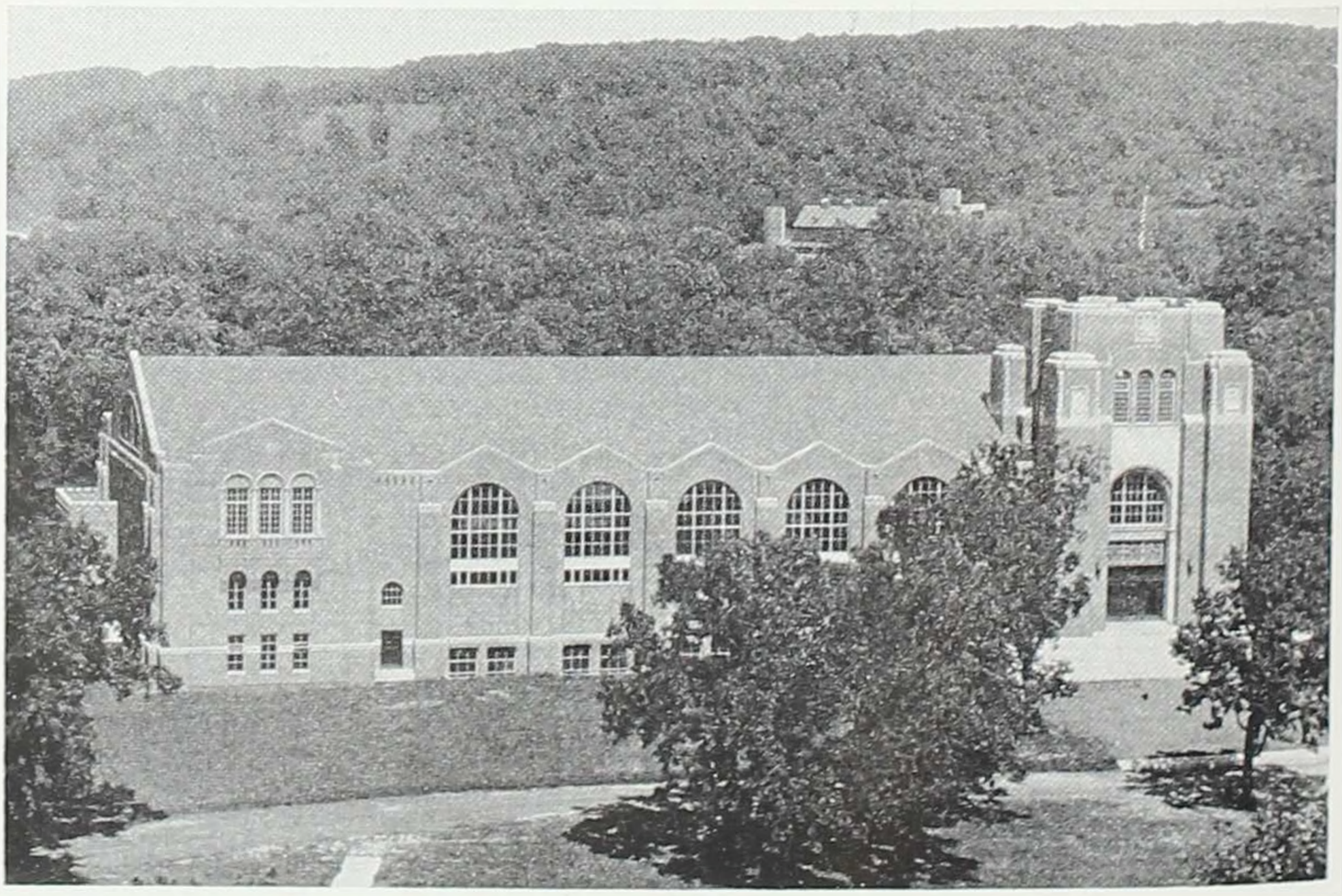
Woodcarved altarpiece by Lars Christenson in the Norwegian-American Historical Museum.



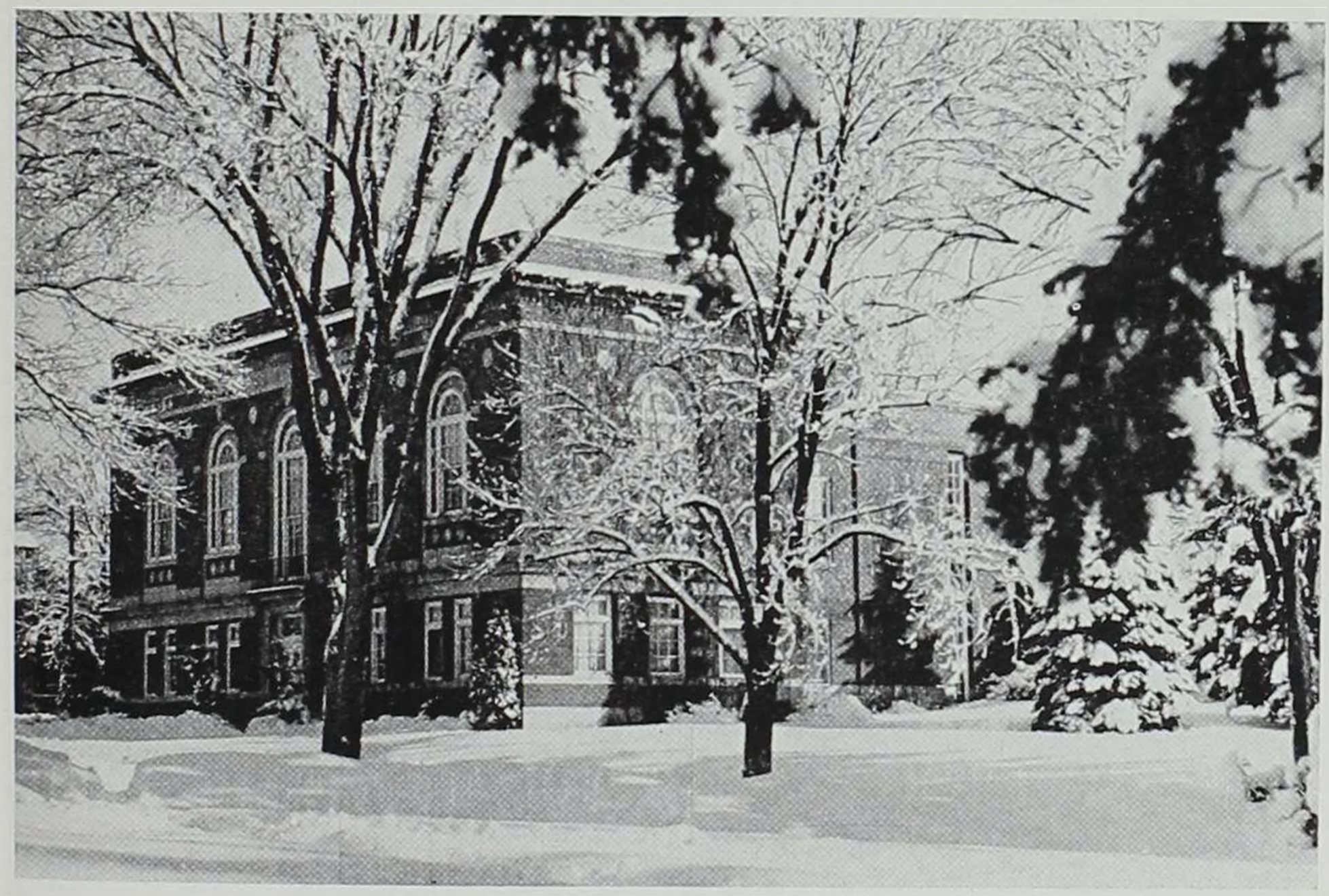
Norwegian-American Historical Museum in Decorah.



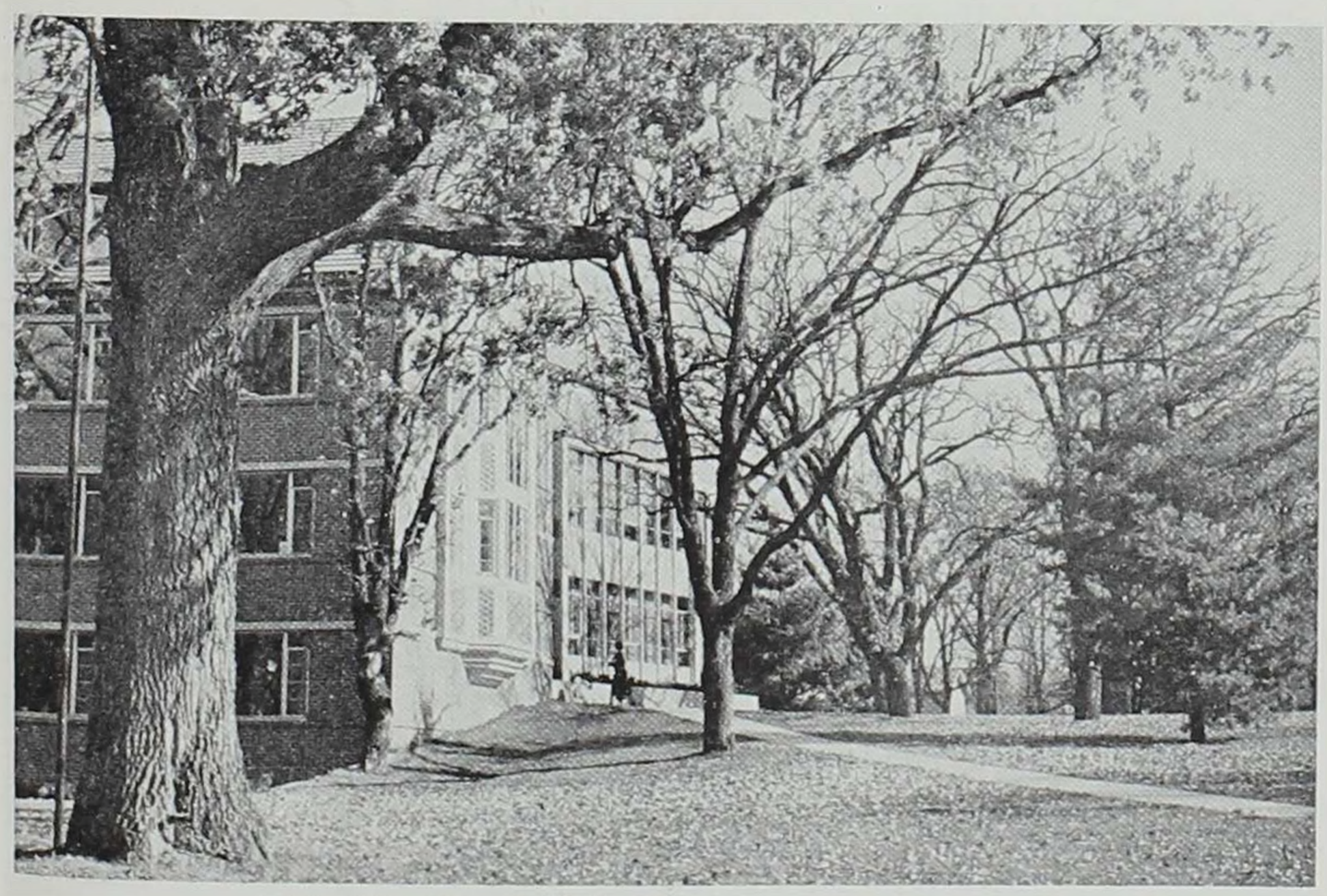
Laur. Larsen Hall.



C. K. Preus Gymnasium. College Farm in background.



Koren Library in winter.



Diderikke Brandt Hall. New dormitory for women.

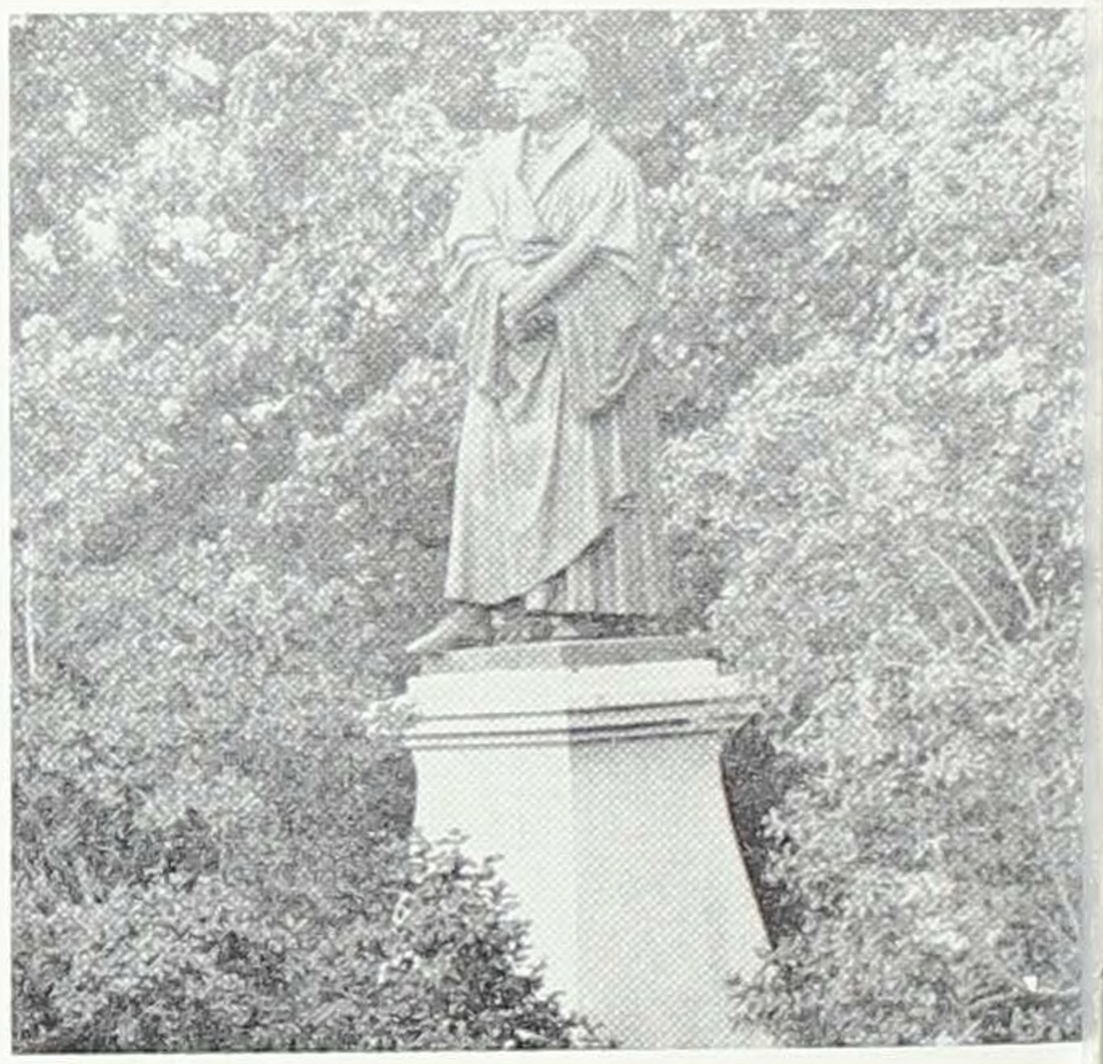
Crown Princess Martha receiving a gift in 1939 as Crown Prince Olav (now King Olav V) looks on.

Students leaving New Main.

A student social hour on Luther campus.

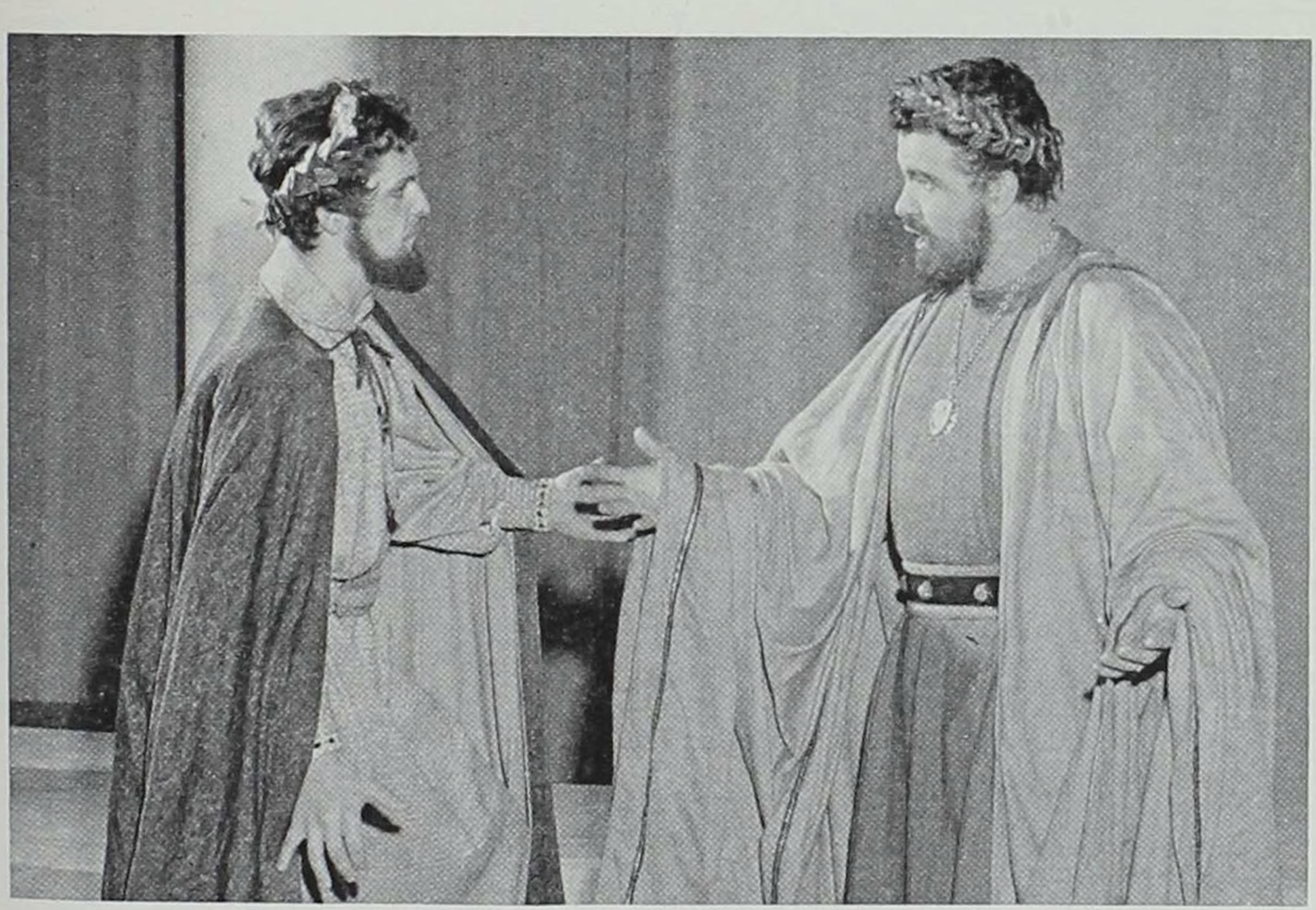
Strolling to Chapel.

College motto at entrance to New Main.

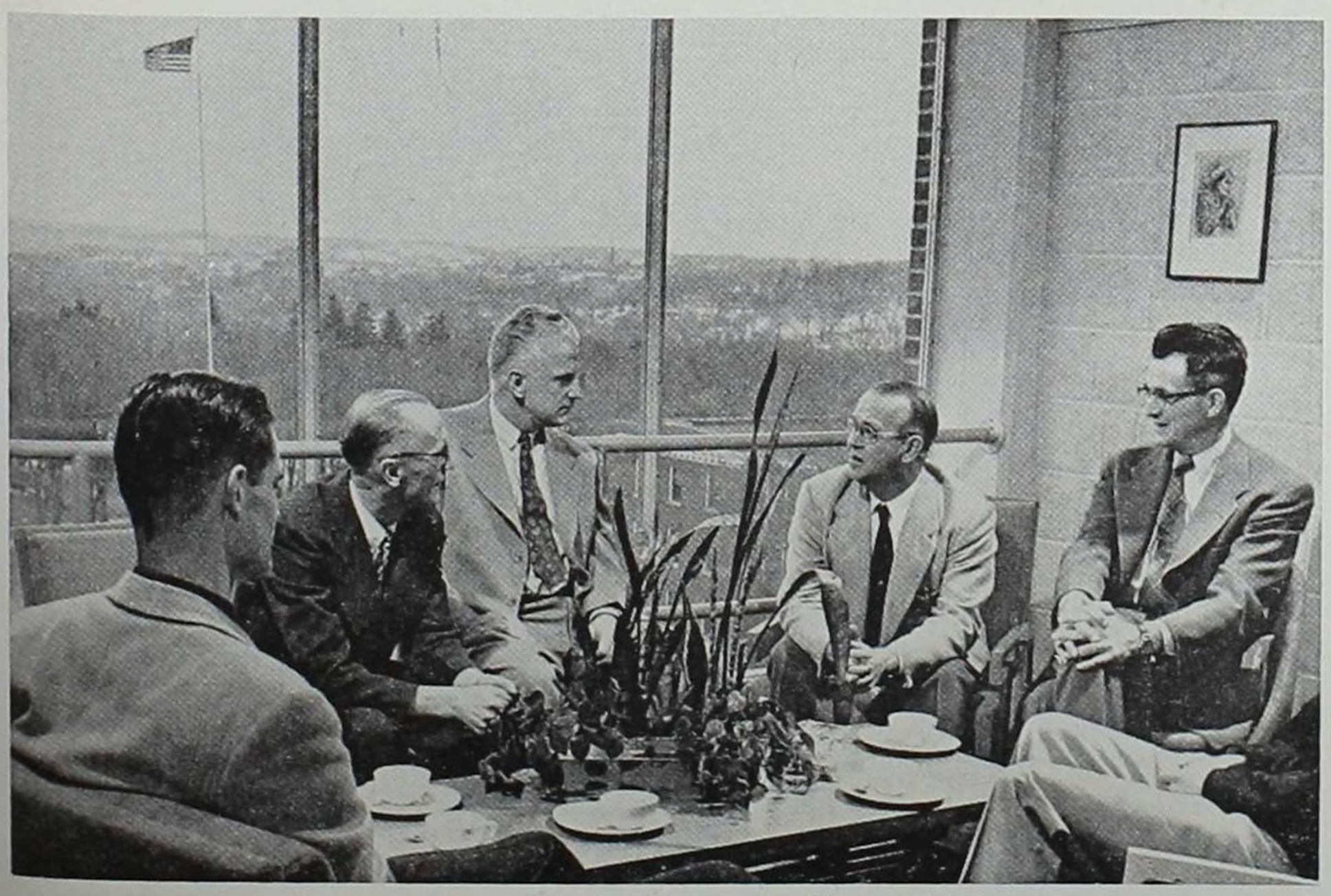


Replica of Rietschel's statue of Martin Luther.

Christmas transparencies in Diderikke Brandt Hall window.



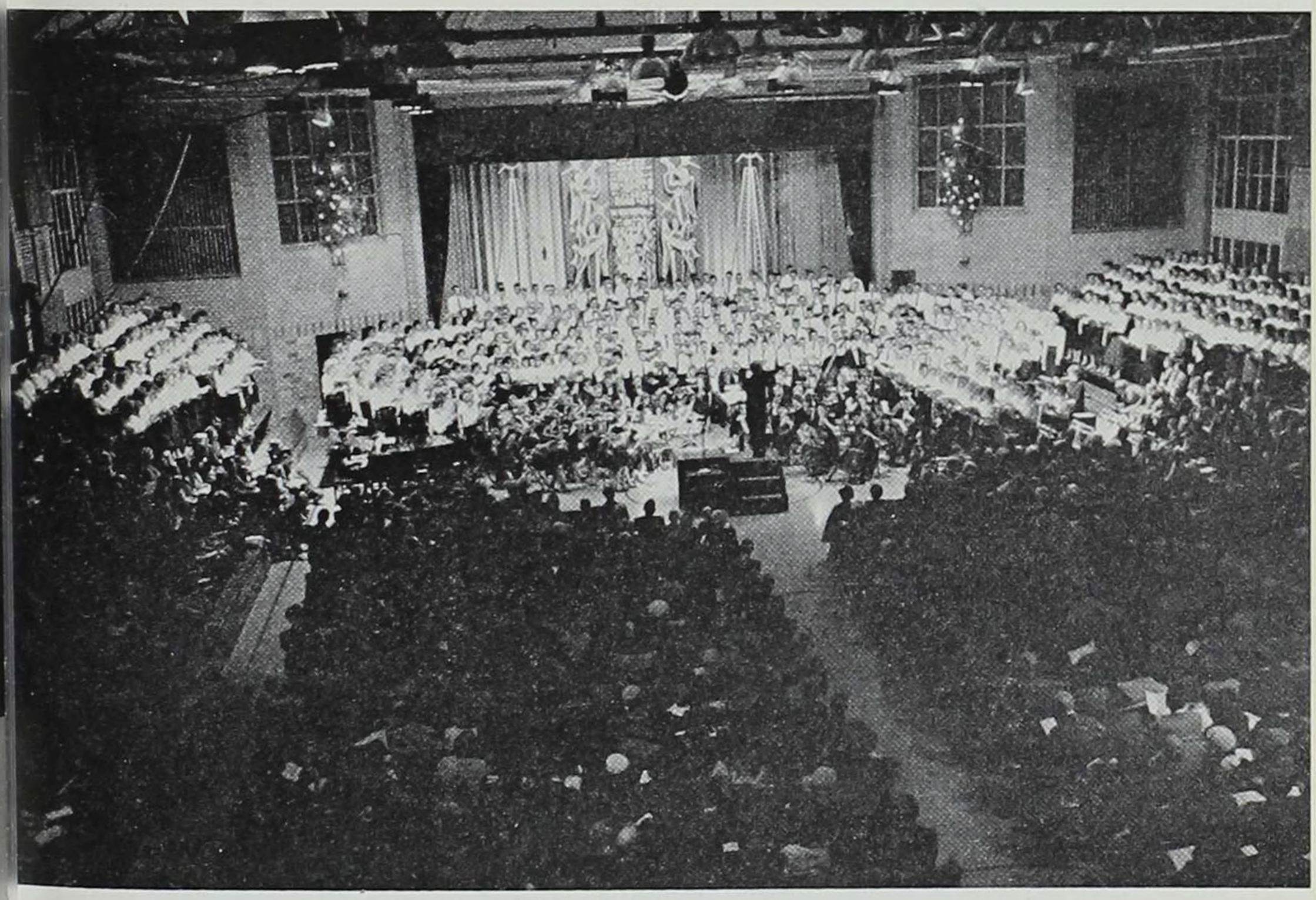
Norman Rice as King Oedipus and Patrick Mealy as Creon in *Oedipus Rex,* 1961.



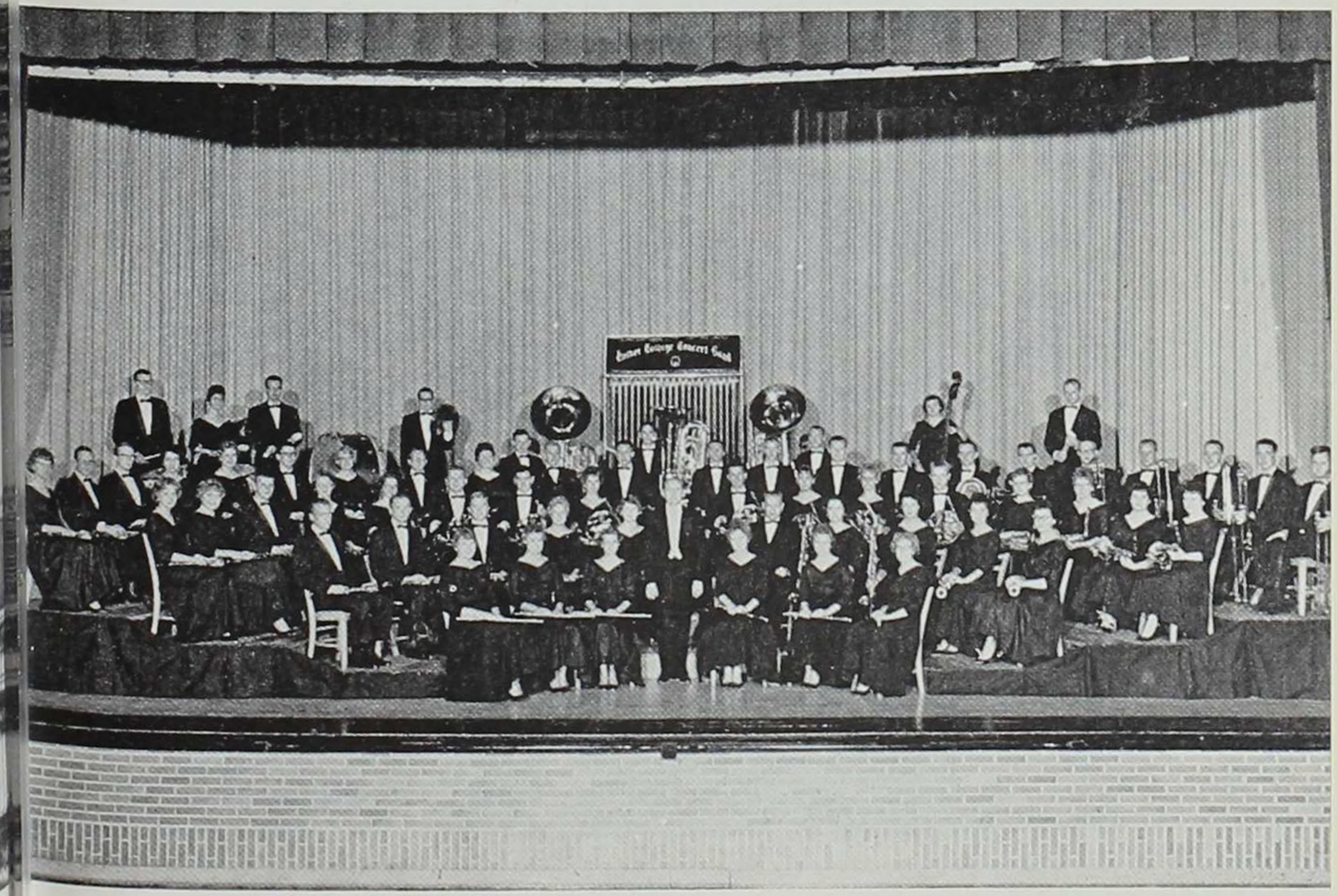
View from faculty lounge in New Main.

College Union. Under construction in 1961.

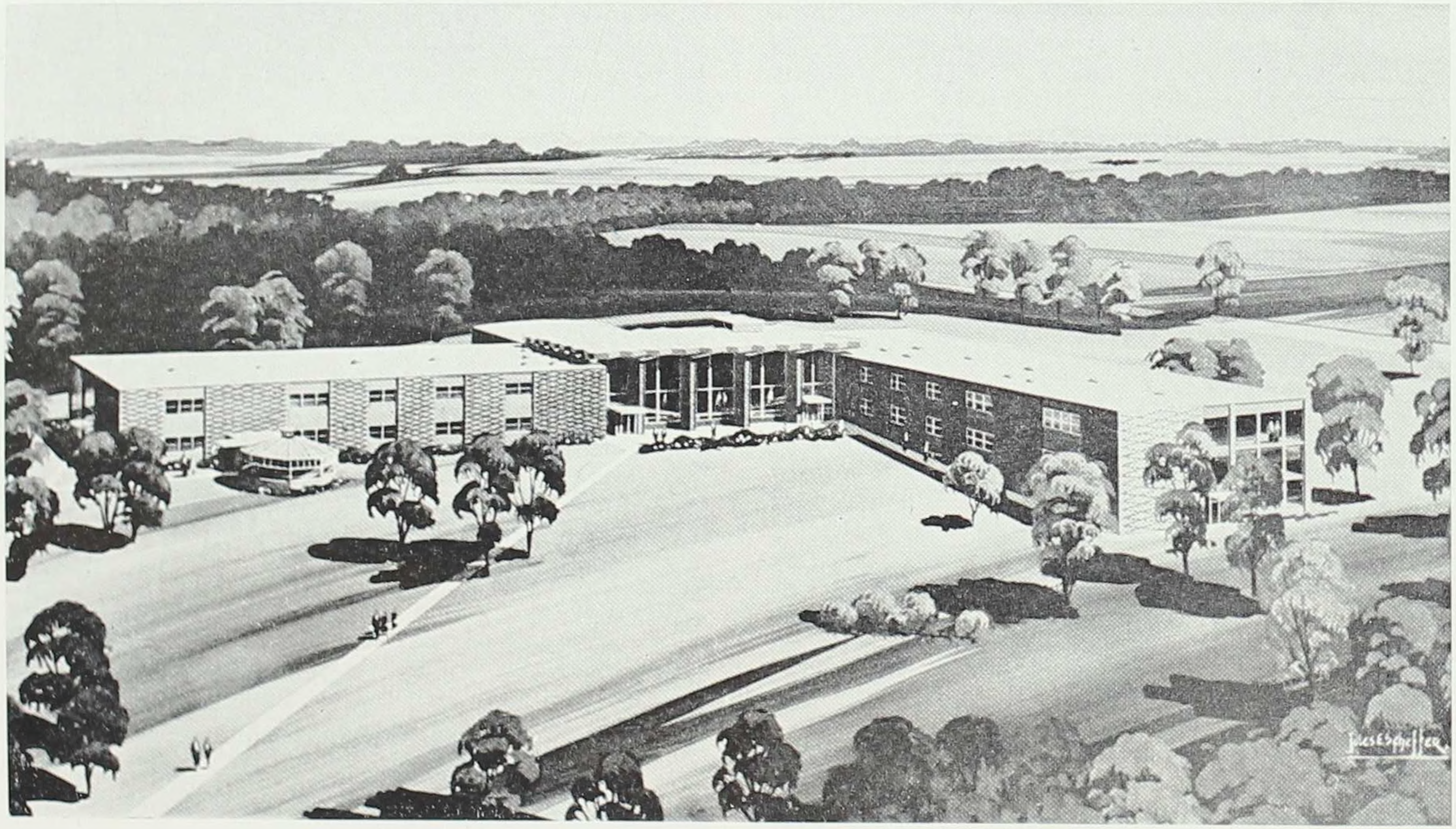
Oscar L. Olson Hall. New dormitory for men.



The Messiah — 1960.



Luther College Concert Band made European tour in 1961.



Valders Memorial Hall of Science dedicated September 29, 1961.

originally a part of the museum, were later turned over to the library.

In the nineties there was agitation for the introduction of coeducation. Some stirring editorials and articles appeared in *College Chips*. The Synod elected a committee to study and to report on the matter. But this was a step too advanced for the conservative old Synod leaders even though all daughter schools of Luther, such as St. Olaf College and many academies, were coeducational institutions. With political finesse that was worthy of a better cause, the leaders buried the report in committee, and Luther continued as a college for men.

Over the years the college had to a considerable degree become an American institution. Its old Latin school character was still reflected in its rigid classical curriculum, although even here the demand for electives had made itself felt. But the days when instructors were men trained in Norway were gone. The time when all instruction was given in Norwegian had passed. The second and third generations were coming on the scene, even in the faculty.

Among the students the change was even more marked. Through them and through the alumni new ideas were filtering in. Even the most conservative were aware of the changes, slow as some of them were to accommodate themselves to the inevitable. It cannot be said that the school itself

consciously sought to be an island of Norwegianism in a dynamic American world. On the contrary the leaders had from the earliest beginnings looked forward to the day when the institution would be wholly an American school. But the old ties, the old traditions were deep-rooted. Each break caused a tug at the heartstrings. All that was sound and strong and vital and beautiful in their heritage summoned up a loyal response from the school's leaders. Only slowly did they yield to the insistent demand of youth. The change came, but it came in subtle, little-noticed ways. By the time Laur. Larsen, its first president, stepped down in 1902 after forty-one years at his post, the college was ready for a long stride forward.

Coeducation Introduced

In its 100 years Luther has had five presidents: Laur. Larsen, 1861-1902; Christian K. Preus, 1902-21; Oscar L. Olson, 1921-32; Ove J. H. Preus, 1932-48; and J. W. Ylvisaker, 1948-. The conservative nature of the Norwegian, who is never eager for change merely for the sake of change, is reflected in these tenures.

The long presidency of Laur. Larsen had left indelible marks on the school. Foremost among these were a God-fearing attitude that was serious and genuinely pious, but not pietistic; sound scholarship that tolerated no sham or hypocrisy; and a spirit of democracy and self-control that bred self-reliance. It was Larsen, said one alumnus, who gave the school its "latitude in education." The products of such training knew where they stood; they were not easily misled by outward appearances or by the fashion of the hour; and they chose their course of action on the basis of principle, not expediency. This was the great achievement of the pioneer period.

The college, however, had not kept pace with the material progress of its supporters. Its educational plant and its educational offerings had not grown to meet the expanding needs of the time.

The course of study had changed only slightly from the earliest days of the school. It was still strictly classical. This curriculum, the old leaders firmly believed, was the best preparation not only for the ministry, but for other professions as well. It was not a narrow course, for it involved a thorough grounding in the languages, history, philosophy, and literature — in short, in the culture — of two great ancient civilizations, and an exacting training in at least three modern languages. But science in the nineteenth century was making new advances and new demands; science was creating in the laboratory the new instrument of education. It was time to recognize the altered conditions.

The physical plant, likewise, had expanded only slightly beyond that of early days. In 1876 the edifice of First Lutheran Church was constructed a mile from the campus in downtown Decorah; the college had a half interest in this structure, which was designed to be both a church and the college chapel. When the building was dedicated the president announced that "the building program for Luther College was completed except possibly for some teachers' residences and minor buildings." Evidently Larsen had in mind a small, compact school of a strictly classical nature. In harmony with this view, a small frame gymnasium and a small frame hospital were the only additions up to the end of his presidency.

But for some time there had definitely been a

need for expansion. A new administration, that of C. K. Preus, attacked both problems with vigor. Yet Preus, despite a willingness to experiment and to foster new ideas, found that his own convictions prevented him from departing from the old classical curriculum. True, he permitted slight modifications of the classical course and introduced some electives. But basically, despite considerable debate and several minor changes, the course of study was not essentially altered.

In other areas Preus was more successful. The gymnasium was tripled in size; a new dormitory, Laur. Larsen Hall, with accommodations for 200 men, was constructed, new facilities for the physical sciences were provided, the hospital was enlarged, a dining hall was built, and Koren Library, the first fireproof structure on the campus, was on its way to completion before a heart attack caused his death in 1921. Of Koren Library Hardin Craig, then professor of English at the State University of Iowa, stated at the time of its completion, "I suppose scarcely any other small college in the country has a better library than this."

During the C. K. Preus administration the college was accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and its first endowment fund of $250,000 was raised. The school had also come much closer to the community in which it was situated. The old language barriers had disappeared. When World War I

broke out, the facilities of the college were put at the disposal of the government, an army training unit was established, and more than 350 men saw service in the armed forces.

During Preus's administration Knut Gjerset joined the faculty. In 1915 Gjerset published his *History of the Norwegian People* in two volumes, the first comprehensive history of Norway in English. This was followed by his *History of Iceland* in 1924 and by several studies in the field of Norwegian-American history. Another striking personality whom Preus persuaded to join the faculty was Carlo A. Sperati. Sperati made the Luther College Concert Band an outstanding organization. Under his baton it toured from coast to coast and twice made concert tours to Europe. Its influence became even more widespread through the "Sperati men" who as high school band instructors brought his ideals of music to scores of Midwest communities.

The library expanded to more than 33,000 volumes during Preus's regime. Karl T. Jacobsen became the college's first full-time librarian in 1920; he carried out the complete reorganization of the library according to the Library of Congress classification. This classification system, it may be noted, was worked out under the leadership of another Luther College graduate, internationally-known James C. M. Hanson, who was chief of the cataloging division of the Library of Congress

from 1897 to 1910. In 1928 Hanson headed the American commission of library experts who were sent to Rome to draw plans for the recataloging and classification of the Vatican library.

Under Preus the museum made further progress. One of his acquisitions was the beautiful altar piece, hand-carved in wood by Lars Christenson, by some regarded as the finest specimen of Norwegian folk art in this country.

The first college annual was published in 1911. Since 1920 this publication has been called *The Pioneer,* a name chosen to honor the early settlers. Intercollegiate debating was introduced in 1903; in the same year oratory was greatly stimulated by the establishment of annual prizes.

Under Carlo A. Sperati, the rendition of great choral works became a tradition. Sperati reorganized the Decorah Choral Union, thus uniting the musical forces of town and college. This group, after singing several of the great oratorios, centered its attention on Handel's "Messiah," and gave it every year. The annual rendition shortly before Christmas is now so popular that the oratorio is presented twice to satisfy the eager demand for tickets to the performances.

The old intramural sports were still cultivated. A group of vigorous young men needs at least a minimum of physical activity. For a time skating became very popular. This was true especially after the return of Professor L. S. Reque to the

college from a tour of duty as United States consul general in Holland. He and his wife were excellent skaters and brought an enthusiasm for the sport back with them. An interesting carryover from these days is the achievement of Orrin Markhus, the "old smoothy" of today's "Ice Capades," whose father taught at the college.

But intercollegiate sports, which had been introduced under President Larsen, became more popular than ever, even though throughout the nation at this time there were some abuses, leading to many discussions in educational circles concerning professionalism and rules of eligibility. In many areas there was also a question as to the propriety of Sunday baseball. A combination of these factors touched off one of the most colorful episodes in Luther baseball history. Six Luther players played with a Decorah town team in Calmar on Sunday, April 29, 1906. Professor Oscar L. Olson, a member of the well-known 1893 team and later third president of the college, at Preus's request investigated the matter. The faculty, which frowned on Sunday baseball, believed that the six players had become ineligible under the rules of the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Association. Accordingly, it denied permission to the six to play with the team on a big excursion to St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, planned for May 17, the Norwegian equivalent of the Fourth of July. The team was crippled, the game was

cancelled, and the excursion abandoned. Feeling ran high in the student body. On May 17 about 100 students, carrying a box made up as a coffin, in which reposed baseball regalia, staged a procession downtown, returned to the baseball diamond, and there conducted a mock funeral for beloved baseball. It is said that one innocent and lovable old professor, meeting the students near the bridge on their way to town and absorbed in thoughts of Norway's natal day, greeted them with lifted hat and a "Hurrah for the Seventeenth of May." There was a considerable stir over the affair, but eventually feelings subsided. Fred Biermann, editor of the *Decorah Journal* and later United States congressman, was moved editorially to break into verse:

> Oh, that dim and distant Northfield,
> We had hoped to journey there,
> In our glad baseball regalia
> And Pond's extract in our hair.
> As those rugged hero Vikings
> Swore by Woden and by Thor
> So we swore to down St. Olaf —
> Quoth St. Olson, "nevermore."

So fare ye well, boys, with your tragic grief. Youth is full of emotion, full of life, and irks at restraint. . . . We have been amused by your demonstration and realize that it is only one phase of manifestations peculiar to life everywhere. Fare you well and march along:

> Gather up the well worn sweaters
> And the mittens and the bats,

Walk the *via dolorosa*
With the crape tied on your hats.
Put away the sacred relics
Underneath the yielding sod,
Where the burdock and the ragweed
In the summer breezes nod.

Such episodes may seem like the froth on college life. But they often have a deeper significance; they are sometimes part of the birth pangs of new ideas. The serious, earnest, and devoted Luther faculty, like other similar faculties, had viewed many student activities with alarm. Such activities, they thought, interfered with study, which should be the student's main business. Only reluctantly did they sanction intercollegiate contests of any kind. Such events were new; and faculties are traditionally conservative. Moreover, they shrank from anything that smacked of the professional. But a strong reaction leads to reflection. Ideas change, even if slowly. It became apparent that intercollegiate activities were here to stay and that they needed, not suppression, but supervision. Beginning in 1917, therefore, regular coaches for the various sports (which students had requested years earlier) were engaged, and student activities entered a new era.

World War I had obliterated many sectional and nationalistic lines. Americans, no matter what their national origin, were brought together from every section of the country and worked to-

gether for a common cause. This influence reached into even the remotest hamlet of the country; it was felt in the postwar period, too, when men returned from far places to a world which could never be the same as before. Luther College was not immune to these influences.

Under Oscar L. Olson, the first president who was a layman and who had been educated wholly at American universities, the college moved rapidly to adjust to the postwar world. Enrollments increased; the Preparatory Department was dropped; buildings were renovated and grounds were kept up in an attractive manner; the C. K. Preus Gymnasium, a completely modern building 97 by 197 feet, was constructed; Nustad Field, a first-class athletic area, was laid out and made ready; paving was extended from the city into the college grounds; an 80-foot flagpole was erected; several lots were added to the campus proper; the endowment funds were more than tripled; the Frank Jewell farm of 360 acres which adjoined the campus to the north and west, was acquired; KWLC radio station was licensed in 1927 and equipped; facilities for the study of the sciences were expanded; the first honorary degree was granted in 1924; publicity was stepped up considerably; and the library was almost doubled in size to about 60,000 volumes.

During this period, under the direction of Knut Gjerset, who became curator in 1921, the museum

had its most dramatic growth. In 1925 it was officially designated the Norwegian-American Historical Museum. In 1926 similar institutions in Norway sent over extensive gifts to be added to the collections already on hand in Decorah. In 1932 the three-story building of the former Lutheran Publishing House was secured to house museum articles. Here Gjerset arranged exhibits to give a picture of Norwegian life and culture in both Norway and this country, including many rare and valuable articles from pioneer days. Under his direction the institution became widely known and was placed on the recognized list of museums of the Smithsonian Institution as outstanding in its portrayal of the life and history of a national immigrant group.

The curriculum, despite several attempts at change, had remained essentially a strictly classical one. At length, after the stock market crash in 1929 had upset economic conditions and caused a decrease in enrollment, the school in 1931 adopted a reorganization which dropped the classical requirements entirely and wholly modernized the course of study. It was a sweeping change, but long overdue.

In the same year President Olson proposed that Luther College become coeducational and admit women on equal terms with men. The suggestion caused a sharp division of opinion among alumni and friends of the school. The situation was com-

plicated by the fact that the depression following the 1929 crash involved the institution in serious financial difficulties. Expansion had outrun its available resources. The two problems, coeducation and finance, were intertwined in the discussions that arose. After the Board of Education of the supporting synod which, under the Articles of Incorporation of the college at that time had a decisive voice in its affairs, refused to support the proposal for coeducation, Olson resigned. He continued on the staff until his retirement in 1952 after fifty-one years of service, the longest in the college's history. Long before his retirement he had the satisfaction of seeing his proposal adopted and of watching women take their place on the college campus. Oscar L. Olson Hall, a dormitory for men, was named in his honor in 1954.

Olson was succeeded by Ove J. H. Preus, son of the second president of the college and at the time of his election president of Augustana College, Sioux Falls. Preus's first task, as he took the helm of the troubled institution, was to keep the craft afloat and to persuade well-meaning supporters not to rock the boat. Finances slowly mended. Meanwhile, in 1932, proponents of coeducation in the Decorah vicinity had organized the Decorah College for Women. They secured an agreement under which Luther College furnished most of the instruction. They were also successful in obtaining accreditation from the

North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Women began to be seen on Luther's campus and in its classrooms. Decorah College for Women granted its first two B.A. degrees in June, 1935.

Sentiment changed so rapidly that the Luther College Corporation in June, 1936, wholeheartedly voted coeducation for Luther College. Decorah College for Women, having served its purpose, was taken over by the older institution and its alumnae were made alumnae of Luther College. The same meeting of the corporation adopted a set of new and revised Articles of Incorporation which, in addition to providing for coeducation, enlarged the Board of Trustees and gave the college a far greater degree of autonomy than it had enjoyed in the past. Thus, after seventy-five years as a classical men's school, the college entered on a new period in its development. It had modernized its course of study and had broadened its objectives so that it might serve "the young people" of the church without restriction as to sex.

The introduction of coeducation brought some new problems; it also helped to solve others. It brought more students, and these first increases in attendance were absorbed without the necessity of greatly enlarging the faculty. Two buildings on campus, Sunnyside and Campus House, were easily converted into residences for women at only

nominal expense. Thus the immediate effect on the finances of the college was beneficial.

Moreover, the final decision that brought women to the campus seemed to release energies that had long needed outlets for expression. The Diamond Jubilee in 1936 brought a sizeable money gift from alumni and friends which enabled the college to discharge its remaining indebtedness. A memorial to the early pioneers was erected on the campus; the Olaf Angelo Sperati Memorial Organ was installed; Pi Kappa Delta, the first national honor society to be represented at the college, formed a chapter at Luther; an art department was begun; and the college joined the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association to make provision for retirement for its teachers and other employees. The endowment funds, which had suffered severely during the depression, were gradually rehabilitated; KWLC, the college radio station, was rebuilt; and a campaign for funds to erect a women's dormitory made some progress.

At this point the outbreak of World War II not only brought a halt to constructive efforts, but created a new crisis by sweeping away most of the male students and many promising young instructors. The financial crisis of nine years earlier might have been repeated if it had not been for the influx of women students, who took, in part at least, the places of men. What seemed like an even severer blow occurred when the Main Build-

ing, beloved by several generations of students, was destroyed by fire May 31, 1942. This caused dismay and regret among all who cherished its quaint Gothic lines. Friends and alumni rallied; an Emergency Appeal was launched; and a sum well in excess of $300,000 was raised to replace the building. Wartime restrictions made immediate rebuilding impossible. By war's end, inflation had made the sum inadequate and it was necessary to raise additional funds before New Main could be erected.

In spite of the fire, the college in 1942 carried out successfully plans to reintroduce a summer school. Each year since then summer sessions have been conducted, consisting of one six-week and one five-week term. Attendance has averaged about 20 to 25 per cent of that of the nine-month school year.

In 1942, in accordance with plans formulated earlier, the C. K. Preus Gymnasium (which at the time of its construction had been regarded by many as far too large for a school of Luther's size) was remodeled. The large ground-floor baseball batting cage was made into a gymnastic area with baths and lockers for women; separate entrances and exits made it an independent unit, adequate at the time for physical education for women.

Despite the crises caused by the depression, by World War II, and by the burning of Old Main, the college, although its physical plant was far

from satisfactory, had made substantial progress. Its curriculum had been modernized and women had been admitted to its student body and its faculty. Its finances were under control. Its debts had been paid. Its endowment funds had been largely rehabilitated and were once more productive of income. Substantial funds were on hand for construction whenever war restrictions should be lifted. Tenure of teachers was much more attractive because of improved provisions for retirement. Enrollments, which had hit a low in 1943-44 when all but eighty men had been swept away, had already started up before the war ended. Sympathy and loyalty were apparent on every hand. If there was some impatience, it was an impatience that chafed at the seeming slowness in coming to grips with the tasks ahead.

Giant Strides Since 1945

World War II took its toll. The bronze memorial in New Main lists 1,358 names, including 17 women and 35 gold stars. The war sent men and women to far places and to unfamiliar tasks. In great numbers they returned to the campus with new ideas and serious purposes. Luther, like other schools, faced the postwar problems created by the influx; it found its enrollment soaring to new levels and, to care for its students, had to resort to many expedients.

Four large residences, some lots adjoining the campus, and a 25-acre tract were purchased. A veterans' village of seventeen army barracks was erected; two large classroom units were also obtained from the government. Lights were installed on the athletic field, and four hard-surfaced tennis courts were constructed. Rollaway bleachers in the gymnasium almost doubled seating capacity. Additional facilities were made available in the library. Larsen Hall, a dormitory, was modernized, as was also the gymnasium. In 1946-47, as the first step in the college's post-war building program, the Korsrud heating plant with extensive campus tunnels was constructed.

O. J. H. Preus, because of a heart ailment, retired

from the presidency in 1948. His successor, J. W. Ylvisaker, bore nearly all the burden of carrying through the large-scale postwar program that was needed. During his administration the following buildings were erected: the center and west wing of Diderikke Brandt Hall, a $675,000 dormitory for 225 women, ready in 1950; New Main Building, providing office and classroom space at a cost of $670,000, in 1952; Oscar L. Olson Hall, a $590,000 dormitory for 233 men, in 1955; the east wing of Brandt Hall, a $550,000 dormitory for 167 women, in 1958; and Valders Memorial Hall of Science, a $1,500,000 structure, ready in 1961. A $1,250,000 College Union will be completed in 1962. In addition, the four remaining major buildings have been extensively remodeled and repaired. A set of carillonic bells, the gift of Dr. A. R. Sorenson, an alumnus, was installed and dedicated May 21, 1961. A total of about $5,500,000 has been spent in new construction since the Korsrud Heating Plant was begun in 1946.

Despite this extensive building program, the college has not yet caught up with the increase in attendance. Enrollments more than doubled immediately after World War II; they increased almost year by year thereafter. The unduplicated total enrollment stood at 1,517 in 1959-60 and is headed higher. With more students on campus, there are still important building needs to be met. Foremost among these is an expansion of library

facilities, for although Koren Library was admirable forty years ago, it is inadequate today.

Not so easily seen as the step-up in the physical plant is the raising of academic standards. In 1948, as the result of a program of self-examination growing out of North Central Association workshops and extending over several years, the faculty adopted a new statement of objectives — the most comprehensive and far-reaching in the college's history. In subsequent years the curriculum was revised and expanded. Gradually, new goals were set for both faculty and students, requiring higher standards of preparation for teachers and more exacting entrance requirements for students. More overseas students were brought to the campus. More women were admitted to get a better balance between men and women in the student body. In 1960-61 there were 727 men and 559 women full-time students during the regular school year. More women were also engaged for teaching, and equal salary scales for men and women were established.

New provisions were made to encourage greater professional competence within the faculty and to stimulate productive scholarship. The college sought to make faculty positions more attractive by improving the scale of salaries, by explicit provisions for tenure, and by assuming the full cost of a liberal retirement program as well as medical and hospital care.

Since 1915 the college has been accredited by the North Central Association of College and Secondary Schools. In 1958 the college was added to the approved list of the American Association of University Women. In 1960 it was granted recognition by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Luther College students continue to rank well in academic circles. They have received their share of Woodrow Wilson fellowships, Danforth Foundation awards, and National Defense graduate fellowships. In the past decade two of its men received Rhodes Scholarships, three others having previously been so selected. Although coeducation began officially in 1936 with a modest enrollment of 103 women, the number of women in attendance is now approaching 600. In 1959 the first Ph.D. was awarded to a Luther woman graduate. In 1960 the first two women graduates to enter the medical profession received their M.D. degrees, one at the University of Wisconsin, the other at the State University of Iowa. The first woman to serve on the Board of Regents of the college was elected in 1956.

The library has continued to expand its collections, which now include more than 115,000 volumes, about 1,000 volumes of Norwegian-American newspapers now in process of being microfilmed, more than 20,000 manuscripts, and a sizeable collection of Herbjørn Gausta paintings.

More than 290 periodicals are received regularly.

The Norwegian-American Historical Museum, under the direction of the late Inga Bredesen Norstog after the war, continued to add to its already valuable collections. Among recent acquisitions are articles of clothing, china, and silver from Norway and this country; pieces of Norwegian-American sculpture; and a collection of more than twenty tapestries given by Georg Unger Vetlesen, founder of the Scandinavian Airlines System. A collection of twenty paintings and etchings, including a Whistler and a Zorn, was presented to the college earlier by the family of Dr. Nils E. Remmen, who attended Luther in the eighties.

Since 1957 a fine arts festival, sponsored by faculty and students, has been an annual event. There are also special lectures provided through the generosity of benefactors. In 1958 the Knute Preus Stalland Memorial Fund lectures were begun. In 1959 the Adolf Gundersen Medical Foundation, La Crosse, Wisconsin, established the Adolf Gundersen Lecture Fund at the college. Another series is the Martin Luther Lectures, 1956-60, made possible by a grant from Lutheran Brotherhood Life Insurance Society of Minneapolis. Lecturers from leading universities and seminaries at home and abroad dealt with the relevance of Luther for today's world. The lectures were published in five volumes; they play their part in the "Luther renaissance" of late years.

The college has not been exempt from the pressures arising from the sweeping inflation which followed World War II. Higher costs of all kinds are reflected in higher tuition fees, room rentals, and subsistence costs. These impose greater and greater burdens on those seeking an education, whether at public or private institutions. The illusion of well-being created by deficit financing and inflation appears still to create a mirage in many minds.

There has been an increase in the funds appropriated annually by the supporting synod. At present these are more than two and a half times as large as in 1948. Even so, in view of the increase in attendance and the nearly 60% decrease in the value of the dollar, these appropriations today form a smaller part of the college's income than at any earlier period.

In part this has been compensated for by greater support from the alumni, by gifts from foundations, and by gifts and bequests from friends. New efforts have been made to mobilize the alumni for systematic support of the college's program. In the campaign for a centennial fund to mark the college's hundredth birthday, alumni contributed more than three quarters of a million dollars. The college was awarded a $1000 prize for "distinguished achievement in the development of alumni support" in 1959-60, ranking first among large private coeducational colleges in the nation entered

in the "Alumni Giving Incentives Award," administered by the American Alumni Council. Substantial gifts came from foundations, notably the Ford Foundation, whose beneficence extended to nearly all colleges and universities in the nation. Bequests of $48,000, $72,000 and $50,000 were received in the last decade; in this period also came gifts and bequests totalling more than $900,000 from Mr. and Mrs. Louis W. Olson.

A development that is of continuing benefit is the Iowa College Foundation, through which many individuals and corporations make contributions to the state's private educational institutions. Several corporations have inaugurated their own programs of annual gifts to the colleges of the state. Scholarship and loan funds have grown. The federal program of loans to students expanded rapidly. At present total loan funds available to Luther students exceed $300,000. All these measures help to counteract the eroding effects of inflation. Perhaps it is still too early to determine whether the opposing forces have counterbalanced each other. Meanwhile, college administrators struggle with what seems to be a never-ending problem.

A primary concern of all college faculties is the maintenance of sound academic standards and the fostering of scholarly activities. Although no one would deny that there have been ups and downs in the level of scholarship at Luther, nevertheless,

the standards established by the thoroughly trained University of Oslo men who largely made up the early faculties have been felt throughout the school's history. The number of men and, during the past twenty-five years, of women who have gone on to graduate study and have entered the professions is high.

Part of the emphasis on the serious aspects of getting an education may be attributed to the influence of chapel exercises, which are held five days a week. Here there is a daily fifteen-minute pause for renewed dedication to spiritual values. A more formal spiritual organization is the Luther College Student Congregation, founded in 1959; through this, students call their own pastor, elect their own deacons and trustees, set up their own financial budget, and provide for their own Sunday services on campus. Through their religious organizations, students raise sizeable sums to provide scholarships for overseas students. A "Men for the Ministry" conference each year brings more than a hundred young men to the campus to discuss the challenges for youth in the Christian ministry.

Music, since the school began, has been actively cultivated. Today music has a larger staff than any other department of the college. Almost half the students take part in organizations such as the Luther College Concert Band, Varsity Band, Pep Band, Luther College Choir, Chapel Choir, and

Choral Union. Recitals, both by students and faculty members, attract good audiences. Usually each year a light opera is produced. A college orchestra has been warmly received in concert numbers. The Dorian Society sponsors music festivals which attract hundreds of high school musicians to the campus. Recordings have been made by the concert band, choir, and chapel choir.

In 1961 the Luther College Concert Band of 64 pieces made its third international tour. Leaving the campus by bus on May 29, it proceeded to New York to board the MS *Bergensfjord* for Oslo, Norway. In Norway the band gave more than thirty concerts in and about the capital city and during a two and one-half weeks' coastal tour of the famous fjords of the Norwegian west coast. It then took a three-weeks' sightseeing tour through Denmark and Germany, up the Rhine by river steamer to Switzerland, thence across the Alps to Italy, by way of the Italian and French Riviera to France and Paris, and then via Belgium and the Netherlands to Copenhagen for the return ocean voyage. After landing in New York August 14, the organization proceeded by chartered buses to Miami Beach, Florida. There it was featured at the first International Luther League convention of the newly-formed American Lutheran Church before 14,000 Luther Leaguers. It returned to Decorah August 22.

Speech and journalistic activities are also vig-

orously pursued. In 1959 and 1960 a speech group won debate and sweepstake trophies in the Iowa Forensic Association Tournament. Eleven years earlier a Luther student was the first representative of an Iowa college or university to win the Interstate Oratorical Contest at Northwestern University. Two to three plays a year are presented by Campus Players. At least two original plays by students have been given; likewise a student translation of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex."

College Chips continues its excellent newspaper coverage of college activities. In 1926 it abandoned its magazine format and became a weekly newspaper. As such, it has won more than twenty-three All-American awards from the Associated College Press. *New Impressions,* a magazine of student writing, has afforded an outlet for other student literary endeavors since its first issue in 1949. *The Pioneer,* college annual, makes its strongest appeal through pictures.

Each year a winter carnival features ice sculpture, skating, skiing, and tobogganing whenever it can find the weather man sufficiently cooperative. Autumn and spring lure hundreds to the tree-clad bluffs, cool, sparkling springs, and lush river valleys about Decorah for picnics and steak fries. Throughout the year society programs, carnivals, formal parties, Valentine parties, Sadie Hawkins weekends, fashion shows, and beard contests, to name only a few of the activities which ingenious

students devise, offer more than enough diversion from the serious business of studying.

Athletics also provide many opportunities for student enthusiasm. College policy toward intercollegiate sports, as formulated in 1954, states: "We believe that athletic competition under proper administration is a constructive and satisfying part of student life for both participants and nonparticipants. We strongly resist both the tendency to abandon so desirable an element in the development of a well-rounded student and also the tendency to engage in any practice which we recognize as educationally unsound." The college has no athletic scholarships; its coaches all have faculty status, and all teach academic courses.

Nustad Field provides excellent facilities for football and track; it has a quarter-mile track and a 220-yard straightaway. The baseball diamond, scene of many stirring games, is now, with the erection of Valders Memorial Science Hall, destined to be abandoned. These fields, and the college gymnasium, have witnessed many triumphs. Luther has won its share of championships in baseball, basketball, football, track, tennis, wrestling, and golf. It is one of the few Iowa colleges to have maintained a turning squad for three quarters of a century — since December 1886. Cross-country running was introduced in 1955. Intramural sports are popular, the large number of participants taxing the facilities available.

It would be tedious to list athletic triumphs in detail. Yet one may call attention to the long and impressive record in baseball under S. S. Reque, whose overall record of 244 games won, 139 lost, and 9 tied in 21 seasons, made him known throughout the baseball world. In 1960 he was one of the first four named to the Hall of Fame, baseball section, of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

In football, Oscar M. (Ossie) Solem, well known to Iowa fans, had his first successful season as a coach at Luther. Franklin C. Cappon, former Michigan star and now basketball coach at Princeton University, likewise got his coaching start at Luther. Hamlet E. (Pete) Peterson, after thirty-six years of teaching and coaching at Luther, is widely known and respected in college circles. His 1926 football team had seven Olsons in the lineup. One newswriter was moved to say, "Football is apparently taking the place of other things done best by the Olsons, such as ski jumping, herring scaling, and lutefisk eating." Another scribe wrote: "An unconfirmed rumor has it that Luther's coach almost lost a game once through penalties for stalling when a quarterback lost his head and began to call fake plays with the signal 'Olson back.' There followed an exodus from the line that resembled Napoleon's famous retreat from Moscow."

Pete, as he is known to all friends, is tremen-

dously proud of his "stalwarts" in football, basketball, and track (he coached in all three areas for many years). He also has a keen eye for the spectacular and picturesque in sport, and he loves to recount the exploits of the men who developed under his direction. His record, like that of Reque, is outstanding.

Faculty-student relations are cordial — the democratic heritage of pioneer days has not been lost. Perhaps at times they seem almost a bit too informal, as when a freshman some years back halted a professor on campus by addressing him by his first name. Or as when a green student still earlier gained entrance to the president's office and, when asked what the president might do for him, blurted out: "You haven't seen my cap, have you?" Once every four years the faculty lets its hair down and puts on "Faculty Follies," a full evening's entertainment which always draws a packed house. Each spring considerable wit, good humor, and oratory are expended in the appeal by the senior class for exemption from final examinations and the reply by the faculty representative crushing such ill-founded hopes.

Luther College has taken long strides in the past decade. It comes to its centennial observance on October 14, 1961, in a new setting, but firmly rooted in its past. The church under whose auspices it was founded did not remove the word Norwegian from its official name until 1946. Then in

1961 it merged with two other synods, one of German and one of Danish origin, to become the American Lutheran Church. The merger of these churches with different national origins is an outgrowth of the gradual Americanization which has been going on for many years on many fronts, and which is destined to continue for some time to come. The three major Lutheran church bodies in the United States today are the United Lutheran Church (destined next year through a merger to be a part of The Lutheran Church in America), the American Lutheran Church, and the Missouri Synod and affiliates. The eventual union of these three is not beyond the realm of possibilities.

Luther College in its new setting is one of nine colleges affiliated with the American Lutheran Church. The other eight are: Augustana, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; Concordia, Moorhead, Minnesota; Dana, Blair, Nebraska; Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington; St. Olaf, Northfield, Minnesota; Texas Lutheran, Seguin, Texas; and Wartburg, Waverly, Iowa. A tenth college, California Lutheran, at Thousand Oaks, California, opened this fall.

Throughout its one hundred years Luther College has maintained close ties with the synod with which it is affiliated. Although it can no longer be called the "preacher school" of its pioneer days, many of its ablest graduates still take up theolog-

ical studies and enter the service of the church. Many who do not feel a call to the ministry serve the church in other areas. An even greater number enter a wide variety of callings, taking them into every sector of society. They bear, with rare exceptions, the Luther College stamp of loyalty, democracy, humility — a willingness to let the motto of the college, *Soli Deo Gloria* (To God alone the glory), speak through their lives and actions.

President Ylvisaker, who was in Europe with the Luther College Concert Band in the summer of 1961, pointed the way to the future in a message from Oslo, Norway, in July:

> As we round the corner of the first century of service at Luther and head into the second, the efforts of all of us — past and present students, faculty and staff, alumni, parents and friends — have brought our beloved college to a high position of excellence. Yet it must serve only as the point of departure for greater excellence in the century ahead in faculty, students, and facilities, and in service to God and man.

Christmas Transparencies in the Windows of Diderikke Brandt Hall, Dormitory for Women.

Oneota Valley from College Union